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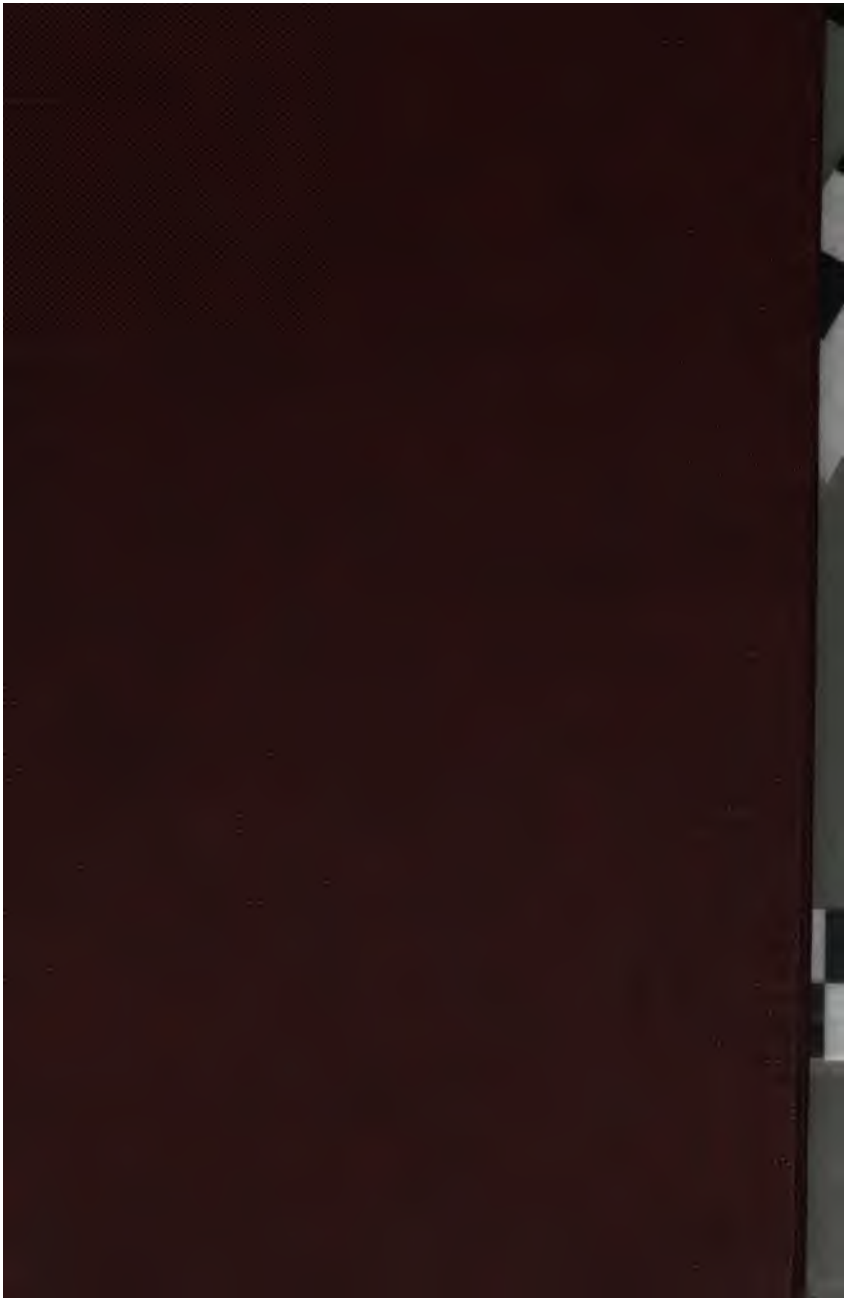

FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing
when a man is to be so soon forgotten
And the shining in his soul
gone from the earth
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing
when a man shall die
And forget love
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing
that a man shall forget love
And he not dead but walking in the field
of a May morning
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

—R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of Stanford Writing*, 1931

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THE CHRONICLE OF MITES

AND OTHER PIECES

THE CHRONICLE OF MITES

A SATIRE

POLITICO-PHILOSOPHICO-THEOLOGICAL

AND OTHER PIECES

BY

JAMES AITCHISON

MINISTER, FALKIRK

LONDON

EGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1887

ANQ8431

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CONTENTS.

THE CHRONICLE OF MITES.

		PAGE
BOOK	I.	1
,,	II.	12
,,	III.	22
,,	IV.	29
,,	V.	44
,,	VI.	51
,,	VII.	70
,,	VIII.	81
,,	IX.	95

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

I. ETCHINGS FROM NATURE.

DEDICATION	111
THE HILLS	112
THE WATERFALL	114
THE GLEN	116
THE RIVULET	118
THE VALLEY	120

PAGE

THE WIND 123
THE CLOUD 125
THE COTTAGE 127
THE RIVER 130
THE OLD BRIDGE 132
THE OAK TREE 134
THE SEA 136
THE BEACH 138
THE WOOD 140
THE RUINED CASTLE 144
THE VILLAGE BELL 147
THE CONCLUSION 150

II. PARABLES FROM NATURE.

I. ASPIRATION 153
II. PROVIDENCE 155
III. LIFE THROUGH DEATH 157
1. THE SEED 157
2. THE SAVIOUR 160
3. THE SINNER 163

III. ODDS AND ENDS.

REDBREAST 169
DIRGE 171
THE ILLUSIONS OF LIFE 173
HOPE 174
SIMILE 175
FRAGMENT 176

PAGE

ON A LIKENESS 177
IN MEMORY OF A CHILD 179
IN MEMORY OF J—— B——, M.A. 180
REALITY 182
PRAYER 184
THE MYSTERY OF EVIL 186
FADING AWAY 187
MADNESS 188
BALLAD 190
LOVE SONG 194

THE CHRONICLE OF MITES.

A book, a good or prefatic smelly needs,

Which none deserves.

The way the author preface gives it not

He to himself reserves.

Some wise, indifferent, he won't declare it,

And therefore preface none will he prepare it.

THE CHRONICLE OF MITES.

BOOK I.

The pastor's peculiar taste.

Good Pastor Gibb was fond of mity cheese,
A taste his servant took great pains to please:
From shop to shop, o'er all the town her quest
She often made, the daintiest and best
Of that sweet, moving luxury to buy;
It mattered not although the price were high,
If only life and liveliness appear
In posse or *in esse*, 'twas not dear.
Skimmed milk and Gouda she, with pious care,
Banned as unorthodox, but rich Gruyère,
Or creamy Stilton, with its veins of blue,
Or Double Gloucester, with its saffron hue,
Or toothsome Cheddar: these were sure indeed
To tally with her master's gastric creed;
Nor hemmed within such limits need she stop,
For oft she pleased him with a good Dunlop.

The pastor's epicurean skill.

Now, Pastor Gibb was quite a connoisseur.
By long experience, each flavour rare
Was to his subtle palate known so well,
He from the shadow of a taste could tell,
Not only whence the milky produce came,
From north or south, from home or 'cross the main,
But also with exactitude its age,
Or, what was much the same, the very stage
Of that life-fruitage which upon it bred;
And whose delicious pungency, he said,
No venison could equal or excel,
Nor fabled dainty please the mouth so well.
Report declares—though this may be perhaps
Apochryphal, for rumour often naps—
That like some epicures, of whom we read
In modern lore, whose faculty to feed
With rare discrimination none can doubt,
And who, from faintest morsel of a trout,
Can tell from whence the lively swimmer came,
The stream of its nativity, its name,
Its age and pedigree, its family pride,
Its character by male and female side;
So he, with even more profound insight,

Versed in the many species of the mite,
Could tell the flavour, if he had a mind,
Of *sexa* or of *octo-pedal* kind,
And from the savour of the dainty rare
Tribes of the tiny ravagers declare;
Could classify them by the hoof and horn;
Could tell if they were hirsute or were shorn,
Paunch-bellied or lean ribbed, or fierce or tame,
Shark-jawed, ox-tongued, or with full-flowing mane,
Smooth-cheeked or whiskered, tusked or simply teethed,
With naked forceps or with forceps sheathed;
Claw-footed and with cushions like a cat,
With drooping ears, or upraised, like a rat;
Blind, like a mole, or keen and ferret-eyed,
Blunt-nosed or sharp, in colour plain or pied,
Red, green, or yellow, black or white or brown,
Bald-headed, or with hair upon the crown;—
In short, the pastor, just as soon as came
The lively scrap within his mouth, could name
By genus or by species, class or kind,
The special race of mites you there would find,
Who o'er the morsel had been wont to roam,
And in its creamy caves had made a home.

The pastor's projected pilgrimage.

Now, so it happened—things will happen so—
That Pastor Gibb to Palestine would go.
His faithful flock,—no flock was e'er so dear,—
Whom heart and soul he served for many a year,
Esteemed him much in need of well-earned rest,
And so resolved for once to make him blessed
With six months' furlough, and to Holy Land
Despatch his Reverence, with purse in hand,
To pay his way and smooth his journey's plan,
From west to east, Beersheba to Dan;
For in these later days with purse and scrip
The pastor-pilgrim must himself equip;
And such expense, if truth must be revealed,
And in this story nothing be concealed,
Was not by some esteemed out of the way,
For six whole months, the pastor's voice to stay.
The gentler of the flock, so sweet and true—
And never more so than when pastors do
Elect awhile to lead a single life,
And so are open still to take a wife—
The sweet ewe lambs, we say, whose plaintive bleat
Had often caused the pastor's heart to beat,
Began at once, with that delicious fuss
With which they meet together and discuss

Bazaars and soirees, pulpit robes and bands,
To amble round, with sweet beseeching hands,
In search of ways and means. Their ready smile,
Their winning pleadings, many hearts beguile;
No bachelor withstands the fairy raid,
No gallant can deny bewitching maid.
Forth flows the stream, down rains the golden shower,
Love taps the fountain, beauty reaps the dower,
The pastor's purse is filled—filled from the heart.
Complacently he thinks how large a part
Himself possesses of his flock's esteem;
But the fair blushing maidens rather deem
The bounty proof of other feelings quite,
Each gift a token of some love-lorn wight.
Some ancient dames indeed hold other views,
And both the furlough and the present choose
To look upon as evidence sublime
Of resignation sweet, which for a time
Deprives them of a presence, in whose light
They bask content, and want of which is night;
Their's was the fortitude, the virtue rare,
With conscious self-denial to prepare,
Not without smothered sigh and secret tear,
To send to Jericho their pastor dear.

The pastor's departure.

Now came the day appointed, and drew nigh
The very hour for bidding home good-bye,
And setting forth, with purse and staff in hand,
Upon the pilgrimage to Holy Land.
All things were packed—shirts, razors, pipes, and books,
Tobacco-pouch and snuff-box, flies and hooks,
And such paraphernalia as we know
Are borne by bachelors who roaming go.
Betty, the frugal maid, who for a score
Of years had served the pastor, mayhap more
(For age and time were to her things unknown,
Since all the blossom of her youth was blown),
With careful hand, each article had packed
Just where it should be, not an item lacked
Of perfect order, such as would endure
Till, seeking book or pen, the pastor sure
Would all the neatness turn to chaos quite,
And Betty's prim exactness put to flight.
At last, just ere the well-filled trunk was locked,
By sudden thought poor Betty's soul was shocked—
Good Pastor Gibb might on his travels find
Full many a luxury to please his mind;
In eastern lands might sup on dainties rare,

Quite different from western homely fare,—
Pomegranates, luscious grapes, and honey wild,
Dates, figs, and almonds, or on dishes styled,
In books which Betty read in stealthy hours,
"Ambrosial nectar, quaffed in orient bowers;"
Still, though all these a passing taste should please,
Say, what could compensate for mity cheese?
Quick as the thought flashed through her simple mind,
She darted to the pantry, there to find
A piece of Cheddar, moderate in size.
She seized, and to the pastor bore the prize:
On it were just beginning to appear
Those lively symptoms to his heart so dear.
"Now, won't you take this with you, sir?" she said;
"You'll miss your cheese."
At once alert, his head
The pastor turned, a little thoughtful stood,
Debating if he shouldn't or he should;
His soul now swayed him this way, and now that,
A thousand reasons *pro* and *con* came pat
Into his mind; and there debate went on
Until, good Betty's patience almost gone,

She asked again, and urged her thoughtful plea.
With wistful, half-regretful eyes, said he,
"Nay, Betty; keep it while I eastward roam;
Age will improve and mellow it at home;
'Tis just beginning: why, in six months' time
Its taste and fragrance will have reached their prime!"
Back to the pantry Bet the Cheddar bore,
Nor for a half-year did she see it more.

The pastor's journeyings.

Off went the pastor over land and sea,
By road and rail, by steam and sail went he,
The ocean ploughed, the trackless desert passed,
And so Beersheba he reached at last.
From south to north he roamed the country through,
Its cities, ruins, wadies, tells, to view;
Its valleys scoured, and climbed its mountain chains,
Lodged in its khans, encamped upon its plains;
Its churches, chapels, mosques, and convent cells,
Its thronged bazaars, its tombs, and ancient wells;
Its groves of oak, its stately cedar trees,
Its streams and rivers, salt and saltless seas—
In short, its everything he came and viewed;
'T was *veni, vidi;* but as peace imbued
His tender heart, the *vici* we delete,
And leave him but a Cæsar incomplete.

The pastor's duplex experience.

But, strange the mystery of human thought,
From day to day 'midst every scene was brought
Back to remembrance Betty's latest care,
And to his eyes uprose the vision rare
Of Cheddar, swarming with the tiny tribes
Whose blood the dainty epicure imbibes,
When, with such slaughter as can none surpass
Since Sampson fought with jawbone of an ass,
He makes attack, and overwhelms with ease
Both motley dwellers, and their world of cheese.
Asleep in Bedouin camp or wayside khan,
The lively mites the pastor's mind o'er-ran,
Before him in his waking hours appeared,
In companies, or one by one would beard
With tantalizing fearlessness his maw,
And flout and jibe him to his very jaw :
In vain the threatening of his appetite,
Complacently the very smallest mite
Its keenest edge saw turned against himself,
Secure to riot on the pantry shelf.
But deep the marvellous in mental states !
What now this veritable tale relates
Profound philosopher alone can solve,
Its why and wherefore in his mind revolve,

Whilst humbler folks must be content to know,
By simple faith, the mystery we show.
By some strange power, akin to "second sight,"
The pastor's consciousness, transported quite
Right over land and sea, swift as a glance,
In ghostly presence brought him to his manse;
And all his journey through from day to day
He seemed to have a two-fold part to play,
Lived double life, and double scenes surveyed,
Two selves conjoined, a wondrous *ego* made;
One self abroad in Palestine did roam,
The other watched the pantry shelf at home.
And there he saw and heard things passing strange,
Was witness, eye and ear, of every change
That o'er the Cheddar came, as to his view,
Its teeming population denser grew;
And secrets, hidden hitherto from man,
Deep as the mysteries of nature's plan,
Unveiled before him were. All that befell,
Which now this narrative proceeds to tell,
Was, if his word at all can credence find,
By sight and hearing brought before his mind.
Whether the pastor dreamt it or 'tis true,
Beloved reader, that we leave to you:

Ours is the humble task, the simple care,
Not to explain, but faithfully declare
As facts of history, not fancy's flights,
The chronicles of multiplying mites.

BOOK II.

Invocation.

Now rise my muse up to a loftier strain;
The theme grows more profound, and all thy pain,
In climbing steep Parnassus' rocky side,
Shall be rewarded, as the onward tide
Of generations past thy vision flows,
And birth, and death, and life, and joys, and woes
Reveal themselves to thee, and through thee claim
A lasting record, an enduring name.
For thine it is to worthily unfold
The history of a world, as it rolled
On from its cradle to its death-day pall,
When chaos and confusion on it fall.
A world this is, which vulgar souls may please
To designate a piece of Cheddar cheese;
But true philosophers will plainly tell
That deepest mysteries are found to dwell
In common objects; and they further say—
Now, most of all give heed to this, I pray—

'Tis nothing else than foolishness to deem
That things are really what to you they seem.
Freed from such prejudice, the keen-eyed muse
Within the limits of the Cheddar views
A crowded planet, with its stream of life,
And crush of circumstance, and peace, and strife;
A teeming earth, upon whose fateful soil
Both comedy and tragedy embroil
Its denizens minute in love or hate,
And lead to bloodshed or to blissful fate;
And even in the span of that short stage—
The limit of the pastor's pilgrimage—
The passing of long periods can trace,
For time is relative as well as space:
And as it scans this tiniest world's fate,
That all its fortunes strange it may relate,
Hours reach to days, and days to years extend,
Years stretch to decades, and the decades end
In centuries, and these to thousands grow,
And as the streams of time still onward flow,
Milleniums extend to ages quite,
As measured by the cycles of a mite.
O mystery of life! O depth profound! Apostrophe.
Whate'er its form, wherever it abound;

Pulse of a hidden power that ceaseless beats,
Throb of a mighty heart that still repeats
Its endless circuits through all nature's veins ;
Progenitor of pleasures and of pains,
Marvel that seems the infinite to cleave
In myriad parts, yet each infinite leave
In consciousness of self and all self's rights,
Whether the self of men, or self of mites ;
Ocean, of which no man can find the shore,
Its shallowest tides, no sounding line explore,
Its whence, its whither, questions all too deep
For those who in the little pools do creep
Of man's philosophy. In whose filth and slime,
'Tis said, the science-wise of modern time
Found out at last life's secret, and unveiled
Its first beginning ; and the triumph paled
The cheek of weakling's faith, until defeat
The would-be onslaught changed into retreat,
And wider knowing, more abundant light
"Bathybius" to bathos altered quite.
Hence what philosophy attempts in vain,
From that the muse her efforts will refrain,
Hers not to tell how life at first began
Upon this world-cheese disk, but how it ran

On from its primal stage down to its close,
With all its heritage of joys and woes.
O golden age of bliss! when mites were few, The golden age.
And on their planet in luxuriance grew
A thousandfold beyond their utmost need—
Rich stores of luxury, that far exceed
The powers of modern muse, in this dull age,
To paint in colours worthy of the page
That bears their record. All their world around
They roamed about, and rare profusion found.
No toil nor care their simple lives oppressed,
No weary days, nor nights devoid of rest;
No narrow, grasping greed foul passions bred,
No "mine" nor "thine" to bloody quarrels led,
For "mine" and "thine" were terms yet undefined,
Since each could gather as he felt inclined
From boundless wealth, unlimited supply,
To meet each want, each wish to satisfy.
A sweet simplicity throughout prevails,
Vice is unknown, and plentitude entails
No dark excesses, no unseemly brawls,
Nor gluttony, nor drunkenness e'er calls
For sharp restraint, or artificial pledge
Of total abstinence by which to hedge

Fair Virtue's form from bacchanalian raid,
And keep her chaste and pure, a vestal maid.
In midst of fulness, soberness appears,
Yet throws no gloom across the joyous years,
They laugh, they dance, they pipe the whole day long,
Each vale and mountain slope resounds with song,
Each grove a paradise of pure delight,
Each cave a grot for banquetting at night;
Good humour fills each heart, lights up each face,
Guides every action, shines in every place:
Contentedly their happy lives flow past,
They only die when old age comes at last;
From youth to prime, from prime till latest years
Nor pestilence nor scarcity appears,
Disease nor famine fills them with dismay,
But from their natal till their latest day
They reap the produce rich each valley yields,
And revel 'midst the fatness of the fields.

The iron age.

But time went on, and ages passed away.
Changed was the scene from golden into grey,
Faded the rich warm light that erewhile cast
Its glowing radiance o'er the happy past;
Gone was the innocence that once claimed praise,
And lost the simple faith of pristine days.

Both peace and pleasure from the world had fled,
And harder times had care and conflict bred;
Existence now was but a daily strife
Which grosser grained the warp and woof of life.
For mites had multiplied, as onward swept
The circling cycles, and had overleapt
The ancient landmarks; and the paradise
Of bygone bliss, where neither want nor vice
Had ever entered to expend its rage,
Was but a legend of a long past age.

The multiplication of mites.

O'er all their world, from east to western side,
From north to south, now surged the living tide;
Its countless myriads peopled every part,
Swarmed in the valleys, and out from the heart
Of mountain ranges, where the lively race
At first was cradled, over every place
Went forth the teeming millions, till the plains
Were dense with dwellers as the land where reigns
The emperor celestial, and still,
Through far off continents, on vale and hill,
They grew and multiplied and spread around;
No Malthus there a warning note to sound,
Or Famine's grim revenge prognosticate,
The Nemesis, severe as fabled fate,

Whose scythe, with swift stroke, sweeps the surplus throng
Of over-population, and ere long
Restores, with firm and unrelenting hand,
The equipoise, which nature's laws demand.

The rupture of primal unity.

As from the home ancestral forth they spread,
And constant increase ever further led
The pioneers away, and distant lands
Were sought, and peopled by courageous bands,
Then broke the wid'ning circle, and dissolved
The primal union, which erewhile involved
In one great family the race of mites,
Bound fast by patriarchal ties and rights.
And all the silken cords of love and peace
Were loosened quite; for as the golden fleece,
Of human legend, luring from their home,
And sending forth to distant shores to roam,
And rending tender links of heart to heart,
From kith and kin the heroes forced to part
Who in the *Argo* sailed,—so greed of gain,
And hankering for wider power, the chain
Of ancient amity and brotherhood
Asunder rent; and search for highest good,—
The good that never is, but is to be,

The bliss we leave behind whene'er we flee
From sweet-simplicity, and thereupon,
The more pursued, the further from us gone,—
Laying its potent spell upon each soul,
And luring on to fast receding goal,
The pristine family of mites, afar,
In diverse paths dispersed ; and then the bar
Of interests conflicting widely kept
The colonists apart, till each band leapt
To wealth and power, success and self-command,
And independence of its natal land.
Thus from the parent stem outbranching sprung
The race varieties of class and tongue.
Laws, customs, institutions, arts, and creeds
By broad distinctions cleft the diverse breeds;
Whilst one and all, in sprightly offspring rife,
Their planet filled, from end to end, with life;
No wastes were left unpeopled, deserts none
In which might fresh discoveries be won,
For whilst, on pinion strong, time onward flew,
Clans swelled to tribes, and tribes to nations grew.

The rise of nations.

Then governments held sway, and kingdoms rose,
Some formed republics, others monarchs chose:
Here princes grasped the power; there statesmen reigned;

Here senates framed the laws ; there tyrants deigned
To shape the edicts which their fancy pleased ;
In other parts, proud oligarchies seized
The helm of state, and through the living tide
Of subjects sore oppressed, o'er regions wide
With iron grip they steered their reckless course
Of self-ambition, and, by craft and force,
Their cruel schemes, dark-freighted, onward sped,
To them joy-bearing, but to others dread.
Now rival forms of rule, and rival states,
To war and civil strife, blows and debates,
Communities, once peaceful, blindly led,
And passion was aroused and blood was shed.
The Muse of History no longer slept,
But, to the task scarce equal, toiling kept
A faithful record of the passing years,
Now penned with pleasure, blotted now with tears ;
For joy and sorrow mingled in the tale,
The shout of triumph, of defeat the wail.
And with the rise of kingdoms also came,
To different races, different fate and fame :
Enslaved were some beneath an alien yoke,
But others harsh oppression's sceptre broke ;
And these, by frequent revolutions swayed,

In turn a commonwealth or kingdom made,
Whilst those seemed pre-ordained, by fortune grim,
To do and bear, to please a despot's whim.
Some climbed the steep ascent of high renown,
And from their proud pre-eminence looked down;
But others plodded on their even way,
Contented quite a humble part to play.
In "laws and learning," sciences and arts,
Some regions far excelled the other parts;
For mites of culture broad, and wisdom wide,
High-souled, deep-thinking, flourished in the pride
Of intellectual vigour, and the van
Of progress led: and thereupon began
A new advancement in the planet's life,
A new development, new forms of strife,
The war of words, and theories, and thoughts,
The contest keen of policy and plots,
The Machiavelian substitute for force,
And civilization's smoothly subtle course.

BOOK III.

The formation of society.

Now widely ruled the mastery of mind,
And complicated more, if more refined
The framework of society became.
Of some wise *doctrinaires* it was the aim,
To high abstract ideal all to mould
By philosophic plan, and so unfold,
In full perfection, schemes of which they prate,—
Their theoretic notions of the state.
But oft-times theories encounter facts,
And plausible hypotheses, the acts
Of free-will agents seldom bear in mind;
So in the world of mites, as with mankind,
Rose counter forces to derange the schemes
The philosophic mind so perfect deems.
Self-interest and pride, ambition, spite,
Conflicting notions as to wrong and right,
The prejudice of ignorance, the hate

Of class opposing class within the state,
The tyranny of fashion, freak of taste,
The escapades of vanity, the haste
Of competition keen for place and power,
The politician's bid to suit the hour,
The rise of factions, din of party strife,
The ebb and flow of energy in life,
The cowardice that fears the path untried
To hoary customs and abuses tied,
Or, on the other hand, the common sense
That constitutes impregnable defence
Against the dreamy theorist's conceit,
The test of trial—sure herald of defeat
To all utopian schemes, the mother-wit
That charm you ne'er so wisely will not quit
The good within the grip for dreams of gain,
Which fancy hatches in the schemer's brain—
These and a thousand other things combined
To thwart and set at nought the most refined
And subtle plans which wiseacres had framed,
And even each the others' projects maimed;
For theorists did not themselves agree,
And one in this device professed to see
Perfection realized, another found

In that the only safe and certain ground
Of highest progress.

The war of *doctrinaires.*

Then the wordy fight
Arose and raged, and mite encountered mite;
In philosophic conflict, to and fro
The shafts of verbiage, sharp pointed, go.
In *nouns* some took defence, some grasped the spears
Of bristling *pronouns*, and awakened fears
In those who, armed with *prepositions*, stood,
Shielded by *verbs* in every *tense* and *mood;*
Behind the *adverbs* some for shelter fled,
But soon discovered close *conjunctions* led
To showers of *interjections*, wildly thrown
'Gainst those whose keen-edged *adjectives* had shown
Their cunning ambush. Then, in open field,
They fought with weapons such as wise men wield;
For all the tropes of speech in bright array—
Figure and *metaphor*, *synecdoche*,
Hyperbole, and *simile* divine,
Metonymy and *allegory* fine—
Forth by the eager combatants were brought;
In poetry and prose they triumph sought,
And each on other sentences did pile,
In *coupé* and in *periodic* style.

The labours of Common Sense.

But, heeding not the fortunes of the strife,
Brought face to face with actual needs of life,
Wise legislators sought wise laws to frame—
The practical, not chimeras their aim.
'Twas their's to try, by means that lay to hand,
To mould society in every land;
To shape their edicts for the public good,
Restrain the lawless, elevate the rude;
To cherish virtue and discourage vice,
Promote prosperity; by sage advice,
To ward off famine, pestilence, and war,
And keep the ravages of death afar;
To further commerce, fix the rules of trade,
Protect its interests, and lend their aid
To settle international affairs,
Advantage gaining for themselves and theirs;
And social laws to fashion, making sure
Of equal justice to the rich and poor;
To shield the weak in conflict with the strong,
And free them from the tyranny of wrong;
To help the cause of science, and secure
To art a recompense, both just and sure;
To foster learning, and, by grants, to give
To lettered mites encouragement to live;—

In short, to aid the good, repress the ill,
And all with peace and happiness to fill.

The resultant.

Thus forces, fitted rather to contend,
Yet wrought together for a common end—
The power of high ideals, abstract schemes,
Perfection planned in philosophic dreams;
The power of nature working out its way
Through crooked channels, to the light of day;
The power of wisdom, full of ready wit,
With golden key of measures shrewd to fit
The complicated lock of public need,
And through the gate of difficulty lead.
These, seeking each its purpose to unfold,
With single aim society to mould,
Each partly thwarted by the others' strength,
Yet partly reaching to success, at length
Produced that strange development which claims
To trace its origin to noblest aims—
That half chaotic, half methodic state,
Which some call civilized,—precipitate
Of subtle alchemy, that seeks in vain,
From dross of modern iron and clay, to gain
The golden treasure of a long past age,
The lofty standard of the primal stage.

Scarce needs it to be told how, thus attained,
This evolution, last and highest gained,
Displayed, 'midst mites, as 'midst the human race,
That medley strange of glory and disgrace,
That marvellous amalgam, said to be
The crown of progress in society—
Alloy of fairest virtues, darkest vice,
The pangs of hell, the bliss of paradise;
The pride of purity, of crime the shame,
The contrast sharp of turpitude and fame;
The glow of splendour, squalor's wretched gloom,
Deformity linked close to beauty's bloom;
Nobility, high-souled, in every rank,
And narrow meanness with its visage lank;
The fruit of culture, vandalism's waste,
And side by side vulgarity and taste;
Bright-glancing knowledge,—wit and fancy fed,
And blear-eyed ignorance, to dulness wed;
The sweet content of those whom fortune fills,
And bitter plaint of those enduring ills;
The insolence of rank, the servile cringe
Which supple flatterers upon it hinge;
The vaunting boast of privilege and rights,
The clamour of oppressed and angry mites;

The incongruous elements.

And all gradations nice of place and state
That lie between these wide extremes of fate,
Made up that strange confusion which we find
When order is with anarchy combined.

The complex variety of rank and grade.

In every land, 'mongst mites of every name,
Thus shaped and framed society became;
And all the features, whether grave or gay,
Which civilized communities display
Appeared in greater or in less degree.
No people from the pride of progress free:
And rival nations sought, with might and main,
The wreath of triumph in this race to gain.
Not more involved, nor differing more in kind,
The veins geologists profess to find
In piercing through the swelling crust that rounds
The globe on which the human race abounds,
Than were the castes and classes, ranks and grades,
The lines of etiquette, the subtle shades
Of social status which throughout held sway,
By pride inspired, by force brought into play.

BOOK IV.

SUPREME o'er all, the great among the great, The first estate.
Moved kings and queens, in trappings proud of state;
And princelings lived in luxury and ease,
Their only care their royal tastes to please,
With broad domains, and title to the cream
Of all taxation, which forsooth they deem
The loyal lieges live to yield, while they
Rejoice the high-born pauper-part to play.
Not all, indeed; for some, in nobler mood,
Both toiled and suffered for their people's good;
Not solely by the right of rank they reigned,
Nor yet by force of arms their power maintained,
But, skilled to show affection's artless art,
They held the sceptre of their nation's heart.
Yet one and all, in pageantry arrayed,
Crowned, sceptred, and enthroned, betimes displayed
Their royal forms, and, proudly isolate,
Seemed to affect, at least, divine estate;

Whilst lofty titles, fit for gods alone,
Were wreathed by flatterers around the throne,
And "majesty" and "highness" soon became
The names which mortal mites presumed to claim:
Who, pampered thus by popular applause,
Conferring honours and confirming laws,
With but a breath, or stroke of regal quill,
Whilst watchful courtiers waited on their will,
Began to rate themselves as being quite
A species far above the common mite—
A race apart, superlative, refined,
Perfection both in body and in mind,
Round whom the panegyric fit might swell:
"The deities descend 'midst mites to dwell."
Nor lacked there those, nor was their number small,
Who, rank-bedazzled, acquiesed in all
Which royal self-complacency laid claim
To link together with the royal name:
And quite as ready they the knee to bend,
And, loyal to the crown, its cause defend,
As kings and princes ready to believe
That on their part this homage to receive
Was wondrous condescension, and deserved
The humble gratitude of those who served.

So those, by fulsome adulation paid,
And these, by self-pretentiousness displayed,
The altars and the sanctuaries reared
Where royal mites, not deities, were feared.
And grateful incense rose from devotees,
Its fragrance, sovereign nostrils fit to please:
The monarchs sat on thrones like frosted gold,
Whilst round them fumes intoxicating rolled.
To render this the highest creed of some,
For loyalty, religion had become.
Nor such alone as owned monarchial sway,
Were found the part of worshippers to play,
For in the sacred presence of a prince
E'en stern republicans would sometimes wince,
And, heedless of the maxims they professed,
Like Balaam, brought to curse, they only blessed.
"Divinity doth hedge a king," they said,
And, deeply reverential, bowed the head;
Whilst some were known instinctively to glide
Prone to the ground, and kiss the feet of pride.

The second estate.

But next to royal blood, with which none dare
Aught in the lower social ranks compare,
Proud mites of title claimed the highest place,
And deigned with conscious dignity to grace

The apex of society, from whence
They scanned with lofty interest the dense
And servile multitude, so prone to crawl
And render homage to them, one and all.
Supreme they ruled in politics and taste,
Whilst mites in circles less select made haste
To bend before them, and whate'er they shaped,
New fashions or new laws, obeyed or aped.
Some sat within the senates, jealous-eyed,
To check the rising of the surging tide
That threatened to engulf their ancient dower,
And drive them from their lofty place and power.
Some fattened bravely on their nations' wealth,
In sinecures, acquired by gift or stealth,
And ease conferred the heritage of years
Upon them. Others, shallow-pated peers,
Picked up perpetual pensions, and preserved
The privilege of rank; nor often swerved
They from the narrow path, whose end and aim
Is still for self each perquisite to claim
Which falls to those who black the royal boots,
And help the royal rakes to pluck the fruits
Of wanton pleasures, or as minions wait
To flatter some great minister of state,

To fetch and carry, and provide the means
For dark intrigues and Machiavelian schemes.
Small care had they what heritage of shame
From guilty ancestors down to them came,
Or what in turn their own misdeeds might leave
To such as from them birth and name receive,
If only theirs were title, wealth, and power—
Rewards the infamous delight to shower
On those who prove themselves possessed of skill
Their vice to serve and carry out their will.
Thus favourites at court, who cringed and fawned,
And for their master's pleasure honour pawned,
And cunning schemers, ready of address,
Whose craft had gained the laurel of success,
The peerage swelled within the world of mites,
And founded families with patent rights
Of high nobility; and name and shame
Emblazoned were upon the scroll of fame,
Or, rather, in the annals of their times
Were pilloried their characters and crimes.
A few there were indeed in better days,
Who earned the tribute of their nations' praise
By deeds of worth, performed in peace or war,
At home in council, or in camp afar;

By gaining triumphs in a righteous cause,
Or wisely framing just and equal laws.
And these the people, worshippers of names,
And knowing not how else their lofty claims
To lasting gratitude and wide renown,
Sufficiently to compensate and crown,
By acclamation, raised to high degree,
And ranked them with the "old nobility."
And such the frailty even of the wise,
So brightly titles glittered in their eyes,
So flattering to fancy 'twas to hear
The names "My lord," "Your grace," fall on the ear,
That even they who just repute had gained,
Whose worth had popular applause constrained,
An honour deemed to have their names enrolled
Amongst the spawn of vagabonds of old.

The third estate.

But in this record of the world of mites
Another class demands historic rights:
The great Plutocracy, who aped the pranks
Of those above them in the social ranks;
Who wed their daughters to an empty name,
And titles, sounding high, mistook for fame;
Who, when to stations further up they went,
The ladder kicked by which they made ascent,

Forgetting quite the trade of former days
By which they earned their money and their praise,
And paying well the "Lyon King-at-arms"
To forge a pedigree, with special charms,
That traced their family back to ancient times
When robbery and murder were not crimes,
And linked them to some thieving chief of old,
Who sacked the land for glory and for gold.
Not ours to say ('twould be but casting mud),
"The kin of character, if not of blood,
This craving showed, and like will cling to like,
And rogues with rogues will quickly friendship strike;"
For all were honourable mites who gained
The smile of Fortune, and her grace retained:
No stain could rest upon their fair renown,
Nor scandal their integrity pull down,
Who, Crœsus-like, on wealth their virtue based,
And all their fame in purest gold encased.
If aught of arrogance their breasts inspired,
'Twas only such as oftentimes had fired
The souls of noble mites, who, by the sword,
Had reared themselves above the common horde;
So these, more safely in the way of peace,

Sought rank and reputation to increase,
And both secured without the sweat of strife,
Or danger to their coward limbs and life,
The lofty summit of ambition gained,
When Fortune, fickle as the weather, rained
The golden shower upon them, and filledup
With sparkling drops the over-brimming cup.
Then, as the peacock of his plumes is proud,
As crows the bantam on the dunghill loud,
As royal fools of cap and bells were vain,
And strutted, jingling still the fools' refrain,
So they, exulting in their aureate store
Amongst their fellow mites, vain-glorious bore
Their purse-proud paunches, and would scarcely deign
To cast a glance on those whose weary pain
To win the smile of her who coyly stands
Holding the horn of plenty in her hands,
No recompense received. It mattered not
Though such were princes in the realm of thought,
Though poetry, painting, sculpture owned their sway,
And all the arts were ready to obey
The royal mandates of their master-minds,
And bend before their sceptre-skill that binds
To mortal service sciences abstruse,

And mysteries celestial shapes for use
The world of mites within ;—for mind and brain,
Unskilled the grosser treasure-store to gain,
'Mongst mites of wealth, were held in small esteem,
Nor to their purblind vision did they seem
Other than fitful gleams that lead astray,
Like will-o'-wisps, along an aimless way,
O'er bog and mire, through mist and soaking rain,
Bringing at last to unsubstantial gain,
To abstract truths, to deeply hidden laws,
To essences intensive, primal cause,
Or beautiful creations, ear and eye
Fitted to captivate and satisfy,
But not to anything save that which fails
When tested on utilitarian scales,
So coarsely fashioned by the hands that hold
That only precious which transmutes to gold.
Small risk that such cheese-grubbing mites should e'er
Be charmed and led by lustre pure and fair—
"The light that never was on sea or land"—
Or that their mole-eyed minds should understand
The gleams of brightness, sometimes downward shed
From lofty lives, by nobler instincts led,
To where they burrowed in their mean pursuits,

And swine-like swilled on foul and fœtid roots;
For that alone which gratified their maws,
Or might be grasped within their greedy claws,
Had charm for them, reality possessed,
And, all their wants supplying, made them blessed.

The fourth estate.

Now, from the ornamental "upper ten,"
Whose fame and graces Clio's truthful pen
Has traced upon the fair historic page,
And marked their influence upon their age,
We turn, still guided by the faithful muse,
Whom bright Thalia sure will not refuse,
With grave Melpomene, due aid to give,
That verse may chronicle the strife to live,
The toils and battles, triumphs and defeats,
The bold advances and the base retreats,
In that sharp warfare waged by weary mites,
Through days of bitterness and dreary nights—
The struggle keen for breathing space and bread
In which, by dire necessity on led,
The myriad multitude of common kind
Wore out the powers of body and of mind.

The brain-workers.

Amongst the toiling masses some indeed
Felt nobler impulse than inglorious need,
And nerve and sinew, skill and busy brain

Strained, fame and fortune seeking to attain ;
Not rich enough to vegetate at ease,
Nor yet so poor that penury could freeze
The stream of impulse flowing from the soul,
And bravely bearing on to far-off goal
Of high attainment, projects formed to bless,
When floated to the haven of success,
The world at large,—to aid the common weal,
And cure the woes that humbler workers feel.
True toilers these, endowed with ready skill
To bend the laws of nature to their will ;
To track the secret ways of subtle force,
And, crafty, lead it in another course ;
To read the riddles sphinx-like and profound
That mocking-lipped phenomena propound,
And through opposing adamantine ridge
To cleave the path of progress, and to bridge
The chasms, whose jagged edges, yawning wide,
Had else their enterprises turned aside.
As these in science, others too in art
Unwearied wrought, their aim to bear the part
Of benefactors of their fellow-kind,
To cheer the heart, and elevate the mind,
To raise the soul above the shadowed sphere

Of dull routine, and lift it to the clear
And sparkling atmosphere, where purest thought
With fairest fancy into union brought,
In lustre clothes the common deeds of life,
And makes heroic all its humble strife.
Nor such alone as played the master-part
In subtle science or in glowing art;
But those as well who strove, by precept sage,
To raise the moral standard of their age,
From selfish deeds and meaner aims to win,
Dispel life's gloom, and calm its troubled din;
And those who laboured, careless of the pelf
Which grosser toil may gather to itself,
With tender hand of skill, to soothe and heal
The myriad miseries that mites may feel,
Than sordid want a purer thrill confessed,
And, others blessing, so themselves were blessed.

The proletariat.

But, grasped within the iron grip of Need—
The tyrant grim beneath whose sharp scourge bleed
The labouring slaves, whom penury has sold
For scanty morsel barely fit to hold
By thread of life the body to the soul—
The proletariat toiled toward the goal,
Whose highest prize was but a dying life,

A daily hunger, and a daily strife
For tasteless bread, in bitterness consumed
To nerve the feeble hands, for ever doomed,
Through days of dull monotony and care,
In hopeless round of drudgery, to wear
The shrinking flesh deep to the aching bone,
Nor even thus for poverty atone.
Each morn the weary sense of life renewed,
A prospect drear the toil-worn workers viewed;
Each night, oblivious sleep gave scant relief,
Its fleeting hours a respite all too brief.
And thus they lived to toil, and toiled to live,
Grasping with greed the pittance that might give
To care and misery a longer lease,
And the grim record of their years increase.
Betimes, indeed, twin spectres, grim and gaunt,
Disease, death-dealing, pressing after Want,
Their ranks mowed down, and thinned their dense array,
As, blindly led, they gave themselves the prey
Of mouthing demagogues, with oily tongues,
And poison reeking from their fœtid lungs,
Who, 'gainst the iron walls of truth and right,
The starving legions urged to foolish fight,

And tight the hands of patient labour tied,
By whom alone their foes could be defied.
Prone to delusion, 'twas their frequent fate,
Sport of opposing factions in the state,
Now this way, and now that in turn to bend,
And now to these, and now to those to lend
Their fitful plaudits, and uncertain aid,
As each with skill the part of charmer played.
Caressed, cajoled, to serve the present hour,
And then betrayed by those whose passing power
They helped to prop—such was their common lot,—
Their birthright sold,—fair speeches all they got.
No marvel, then, that rankling deep within,
The sense of wrong strong mastery should win,
And, laying hold of all the inner life,
Should rein the poisoned passions into strife.
But consciousness of impotence restrained,
And dull despair, by coward fears maintained,
The trembling hand of vengeance paralysed,
And thus the hidden discontent disguised;
For oft the churl, fawning, bowed his head
In meek submission for his scanty bread,
And choked the nobler feelings of the soul,
For leave to earn by toil the wretched dole

From niggard hands of wealth, begrudging thrown,
That fain from labour would withhold its own.
Thus—princes, peers, and plebs, purse-proud of gold, The social conglomerate.
And proletariat, formed in coarser mould,
With all the subtle grades that lay between
The lowest and the loftiest extreme,
In part by force, in part by custom bound,
Of meanness and of majesty compound,
The perfect State appeared, the fabric stood—
Society, alloy of ill and good ;
The Constitution, sacred in the eyes
Of all whose selfish wants its form supplies.
Foundations deep, and turrets towering high,
The work of hoary ages long passed by,
But patched, and propped, and pottered year by year,
Now buttressed, now enlarged, as by the fear
Of wider innovation, slow reform
Was yielded, when the muttering of the storm,
Of popular demand to threatening grown,
Presaged the time when all would be o'erthrown.

BOOK V.

The ancient faith.

THROUGH all the change that passing ages brought,
'Midst all reform that time and wisdom wrought,
A faith, grown hoary with the dust of years,
A dim expression of the hopes and fears
That filled the hearts of mites,—an ancient creed,
That told of strange beginnings, ere the breed
Of mites a being had, and traced the hand
Their world that made, revealed the mind that planned
Its rich luxuriance, its fitness rare
A race so numerous with ease to bear:
Such faith, with all its power to curb the ill,
And forward urge the good, and deeply fill
The soul with reverence for the good and true,
And all the life with lofty aims imbue,—
Remained intact. No sacrilegious foe
Had ever sought its altars to o'erthrow;
No impious hand, upraised in ruthless raid,
Against its sacred fanes had threat'ning made.

O'er one and all it still maintained its sway,
Its precepts sage each careful to obey,
Its hallowed mysteries and solemn rites
Inspiring awe within the breasts of mites.
And 'midst the miseries that some endured,
It still the hope of future bliss ensured;
For all the ultimate of wrong and right
In darkness hid, it ushered into light,
And rent the clouds of bitterness and strife,
That cast their shadows o'er the present life,
Or sent betimes the course of vice athwart
A lurid gleam of warning, and the heart
Of hardened guilt arrested, and deterred
From evil projects, which had else been dared.
And thus, a sacred influence for good,
From age to age its pious precepts stood:
Its truths and teachings wise from wrong to win,
And all the heart and life lift up from sin;
Of virtue, still the friend; of vice, the foe,
Rich while it ruled rare blessing to bestow.
'Twas well indeed it o'er the world held sway,
And mites were wise to reverence and obey.

The philosophical prodigy.

But as the fleeting years their course revolved
A freak of nature was at last evolved—

A creature all of light, or so esteemed
By self-appraisal, though by many deemed
Descendant rather of the sable king
Who in the Nadir rules, but who can bring
His power to bear on other scenes as well,
Their beauty blight beneath his baleful spell:
A crooked creature this—brought forth 'twas said,
First-born, with sorrow, when together wed
Fair Truth-desiring and dark visaged Doubt—
A creature prating evermore about
Phenomenon and essence, primal cause,
Effect and sequence, mind and matter's laws:
Self-styled philosopher, as if forsooth
No other mites loved wisdom or sought truth:
With brain bewitched by reason rabid grown,
And fancy all unreined, for forth had flown
Plain common sense, whose wise and equal sway
Mites less profound content were to obey.

The prodigy's aims and attainments.

To find the whence and whither all things flow,
The how and why originate and grow;
To pierce the crust of matter, and unsheath
The soul of being darkly hid beneath;
Such were the aims this Philomath professed,
To reach such ends, he theorized and guessed.

For crude conjectures he would sometimes choose,
And flights of fancy not disdain to use,
Hypothesis uniting with caprice
As ready means of search, by which increase
Of phantom knowledge might with ease be gained,
And cobweb systems founded and maintained.
The secret mysteries of nature's laws,
The hidden process of effect and cause,
The mainspring of the pulsing power of life,
The steps and stages in the ceaseless strife
By which the weaker driven to the wall,
And lower forms extinguished one and all,
By natural selection sternly reared,
The perfect Type, supreme, at last appeared :—
Why, such as these were but the horn-book lore,
The alphabet at most, and nothing more,
In that philosophy, far reaching, which
This wondrous *savant* made pretence to teach.
For protoplasm and primordial cell,
Substance and structure understood he well ;
Professed to trace back to its first abode
The primal sentient spark, and tell the mode
Of marriage 'twixt the immaterial soul
And the dull body which doth it enroll.

Nay, more than this—he even claimed to know
How, from the empty void whence all things flow,
The molecule first into being broke,
And life's first throb from utter stillness woke.

The Record of the Crust.

Now, long before this sage profound appeared,
On broad foundations learned mites had reared
A stately system, framed with pious care,
Proportions vast, and aspect wondrous fair.
No dream-built fabric, formed by fancy's hand,
Whose walls and towers imagination planned,
Whose mythic stones vague visionaries brought
By guessing, quarried from dark mines of thought;
But strong and solid, real in every part,
A fane of science wrought with patient art,
A scheme of nature, such as mites could trust,
And fitly named, The Record of the Crust.

The genesis of the record.

In early ages some their lives had spent,
On scientific observation bent,
In prying, poking, all their planet round;
And of each change upon its surface found,
By careful registration, keeping note,
They left memorials for times remote.
And these, keen-eyed, had watched with patient care,
And gauged and tested with precision rare,

Through years that swelled in number till at last
Ages and epochs now were overpast,
The outer layers of their cosmic sphere,
Its geologic strata tier on tier—
Here, gashed and gored with many a wound and scar,
The relics of some pre-historic war
Of forces now at rest; there, fair and smooth,
Ungnawed by age or time's destroying tooth;
Here, seamed and torn by gully and ravine,
Deep cut by strange convulsion, whilst between
Towered ragged ridges, fractured cliffs, and crests,
With shelving ledges, and the rugged breasts
Of precipices steep; there, not a flaw
To mark divergence from the wonted law
Of restful nature, but a level land,
As when it left its Maker's forming hand.
Yet over all, save where with patient toil
Industrious mites had tilled the fruitful soil,
And kept it soft, a change was slowly wrought,
And year by year to view more clearly brought;
For, as strong pinioned time through ages flew,
The surface harder still and tougher grew.
This change, in all its course from age to age,
By careful measurement from stage to stage,

These wise observers of the patient past
Had into systematic order cast.
And thus, reduced to units and degrees,
They traced the progress of their planet-cheese;
Of growing density and deepening crust,
The rate at last so sure did they adjust
On scientific basis, that they made
With ease prognostications, by the aid
Of past experiments; and thus foretold
How deep and hard, as grew their cosmos old,
Its strata would become, and so how long
Its surface might support the teeming throng
That dwelt upon it. For the wisest said,
That, growing denser as the ages sped,
It colder must become, until at last,
The vital fountains frozen firm and fast,
O'er all would universal death prevail,
And every spark of life for ever fail.

The problem waiting solution.

Thus, waiting for some lofty master-mind
These records into unity to bind,
And thence evolve some law that might explain
The secret deep of Being, and the train
Of change and circumstance from this derived,
The treasure-trove empirical survived.

BOOK VI.

The convening of the congress.

THE master-mind had come—the sage unique,
Skilled to compel dumb nature's voice to speak,
And all her riddles, deep and dark, to tell,
And all her mystery, obscure, dispel.
The "key of knowledge" held he in his hand,
And thus prepared, as with a magic wand,
An "Open sesame!" by which the door
Of every chamber where the secret lore
Of Being hidden lay, wide open flew,
Unlocked, unbarred, disclosing to the view
The treasure guarded by the jealous dame,
He boldly to the great enigma came.
Triumphantly the covering veil he tore,
Laid bare the sealed arcana to the core,
And formed a scheme, which, mites will all agree,
Made science simple as the A B C;
Then, burning to declare to great and small
His rare discovery, sent forth to call

The learned of all languages and lands.
Obedient to his prayers and commands,
They trooping came, from north, south, east, and west—
The knights of science, in the eager quest
Of new adventure in the lists of thought,
Where rival theories, in conflict brought,
Strive for the mastery. They crowded round,
Anxious to hear the subtle sage propound
His latest scheme. Their rapturous applause
Greets modern instances and ancient saws,
With which, full garnishing his glib address,
He sought as well to tickle as impress;
And thus, with ample confidence sustained,
Before his august auditors declaimed.

The philosopher's oration—Exordium.

"No nobler aim can mites by learning serve,
No higher praise the erudite deserve,
Than when through chambers of the past they guide,
And brush the dust of centuries aside,
Make bare the secrets that have shrouded lain,
And buried truth bring forth to light again.
So, now would I these ages dark explore,
And to my fellow mites once more restore
The science-treasures from the tomb of years,
Where, hidden long by superstitious fears,

And kept by cunning from the common eye,
O'ercrusted all with prejudice they lie.
"Well know you all that priestcraft faith demands
For legends of a Maker by whose hands
This world of our's was formed. Its age, they say,
Beyond six thousand years goes not a day;
And in that period the changes all
Of mind and matter—changes great and small—
Whence such development and perfect grace,
As now we see around, have taken place.
Six thousand years! Not less time would it take
To form and harden fast the outer cake
Of this material orb. Our records tell
How centuries of years to myriads swell,
Whilst one thin layer of the crust around
Is petrified, and changed to solid ground
From spongy swamp, which erewhile it had been.
The shallow fossils which our eyes have seen
Embedded in the ooze, now turned to stone,
Belong to hoary ages that had flown
Milleniums before this Maker wrought,
And out of nothing or of chaos brought
Our world and all upon it—at a word,
As say the priests. No fiction more absurd

The ancient faith arraigned.

Than that which thus the theologic mind
Conceiving, fain would with its glamour blind
The sight of strong-eyed science, formed to scan
The length, the breadth, the depth of nature's plan.
Such vain conceit let those alone receive
Who, in despite of reason, can believe
That causes may upon their issues wait,
And history, creation generate.
But leave we fancy such as this to fade
Into that nothingness of which 'tis made;
Whilst led by surer light, we seek to-day
To tread the annaled path, and e'en the way
Of prehistoric times; for by the known
The certain road, through regions dark, is shown;
And safely guided, while we place our trust,
Undoubting, in the Record of the Crust,
With foothold sure, we may at last emerge
Where being is becoming, primal verge
Of all that is, and all that yet shall be,
The germ of time and of eternity.

The genesis of the mite-world.

"Time was, says science, with no stammering tongue,
But clear voiced, certain, as has ever rung

The porous period.

The speech of truth—time was when every part,

From utmost bounds deep to the inmost heart,
This world of our's was soft, a porous mass;
Nor crust, nor rock, nor mountain peak, nor pass
With adamantine cliffs, nor crag-ribbed range,
Was found upon it. Some convulsion strange
These cut and carved out of the plastic sphere,
And shaped with ease the forms that now appear.
In deep recesses where our workers drive
Their dank and dingy mines, and eager strive,
With patient labour, and 'midst dust and din,
Out of the bowels of the land to win
The treasure hidden in the secret veins,
Still somewhat of the primal sponge remains—
A silent witness of the far-off past,
By which revealing rays are backward cast
On earlier epochs; for though records none
Exist to tell us how the times did run,
E'er from some lower type the mite arose,
Yet back to periods pre-mitic goes
The searching test of science, and makes known
The element from which the world has grown.

"The yielding mass, that first assumed the mould — The fluid period.
Our world now bears, was once, in ages old,
A formless fluid, driven to and fro

In wild confusion by the ceaseless flow
Of savage tempests, that with unreined force
Brought strife and turmoil in their direful course;
And 'midst the tortured rack and flying spume,
The horrid din and everlasting gloom
No life could be—the empire of the storm
Was void of sentient being as of form.
Dark chaos brooded o'er the restless deep,
And whirlwinds circled with resistless sweep;
Mad tides and currents coursed in wild career:
As beasts of prey, contending fiercely, rear
Their angry heads, so surging waves opposed,
Glared at each other, and in conflict closed;
Weird spirits of the tumult moaned and wailed;
Nor law nor order 'midst the scene prevailed.

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rimary
age.

"But pierce we to a yet remoter past
To reach the first and highest source at last;
The primal spring from which all Being flows,
The germ primeval, whence this world arose;
The cause complete, the ante-protoplast,
The womb of matter, present, future, past;
The absolute, within whose inmost fold
Were universal types of being rolled—
Order and number, consequence and change,

Matter and motion, all the diverse range
Of thought and will, of feeling and desire,
All sights and sounds, all water, air, and fire;
Or whatsoever elemental seed
Our old philosophers betimes agreed
Contained that unity they ever strove
To reach, and so dethrone the misty Jove
Of vulgar superstition. Thus shall we,
Finding the matrix absolute, agree
To cast aside the trammels of a creed,
Which science proves is but a broken reed;
To free the judgment from degrading thrall,
And place proud Reason's sceptre over all;
For finding this, 'twill easy be to trace
The evolution, through all time and space,
Of all that constitutes this world broad,
Without the intervention of a god.

"In that far past, to which our straining eyes — The nebular period.
Now eager turn, before my vision rise
Strange, ever-changing shapes of vapour-cloud,
Thin as the summer mists that sometimes shroud,
In early morn or late at dewy eve,
The calm and silent landscape. So conceive
This distant time: where science points the way

With confidence, imagination may,
With firm unfaltering step, at once proceed,
And frame a true and philosophic creed
From facts inferred. For may we not conclude,
And by severest logic make it good,
That as the solid from the sponge-mass came,
And so was formed our world's majestic frame,
And as the sponge we from the fluid trace,
The rarer to the denser giving place;
So from this nebular primordial haze,
On which I now would fix your keen-eyed gaze,
The fluid chaos came, condensed in rain,
The second link in Being's wondrous chain?

The theory announced.

"And now at last my theory appears,
The product ripe of long and toilsome years
Of patient thought and observation keen,
The key of all that is, and that has been.

The component parts of the nebulæ.

"The archetypal mist, expanse profound
Which science postulates, remotest bound
To which the sage ontologist can lead,
Or reason-winged imagination speed,
From all eternity pervaded space;
The self-existent, filling every place,
Composed of atoms infinitely small,

And infinite in number, each and all
Perfect in kind, a whole devoid of parts,
A unit ultimate, which all the arts
Of skilful analyst would strive in vain
To decompose, or even cleave in twain.

The original fixity of the mist.

"All through a past, which from no limit ran,
Ere time to speed its onward flight began,
Whilst still unmarked by oft recurring change
Were measurements of years, and all the range
Of moments manifold that lie within—
The threads which Father Chronos' daughters spin
To weave the web of minutes, hours, and days;
Ere rose the light whose slowly moving rays
The gnomon's shadow on the dial throw,
And warning give of how the ages grow;
In short, through epochs which no mite can span,
Because from dark infinity they ran,
The mist primordial in stillness lay,
No atom stirred of all the vast array
That thronged the fields of space, but each remained
Apart and isolate. O'er all there reigned
The rigid sceptre of some iron law,
That like a frost no thermic power can thaw,
Kept all the particles *in statu quo*,

As if some blinding storm of subtle snow
Had been arrested in its mad career,
And fixed for ever in the atmosphere.

The reign of inertia.

"Thus held, as by an adamant decree,
Bound by a spell from which no power could free,
Dull torpor ruled with undisputed sway,
And evolution still was far away,
Nor progress nor development took place,
Nor aught to stir in universal space
The universal calm. Stagnation, sleep,
Unbroken brooded o'er the silent deep.
No force creative on the atoms wrought;
And molecules, as yet, existed not.

The primal impact.

"But lo! at last there came a time of fate—
A pregnant epoch, big with issues great;
A time miraculous, if so we may,
Apart from superstition, name the day
From which the stream of evolution flows,
In which the throb of progress first arose.
For suddenly one atom left the place
Which hitherto it occupied in space,
And on another particle impinged,
And so the law of fixedness infringed.
Then from this primal impact straightway sprung

A strange commotion; every atom swung
Against its neighbour, and like serried foes,
With ranks opposed to ranks and blows to blows,
The whole vast aggregate, in thick array,
Now this way and now that, began to sway.
The wreathes and clouds of erewhile moveless mist
Hither and thither driven, turn and twist;
Circling and curving through the fields of space,
They wheel and cross and join and interlace;
In mazy coils and spirals turn and bend,
Now close together press, now wide extend.
And so it came to pass, by process strange,
Continual motion wrought a gradual change:
For atoms with their kindred atoms met,
And thence the fruit affinities beget
Was speedily brought forth. Proportions true
Close coalescing, and adjustments due
Ensuing, then the harmony arose,
That permeates the universe, and flows
Through mind and matter, and, whate'er befall,
Still forms the central principle of all.
For that philosopher of olden days
Beyond the rest deserves the meed of praise,
Who sought the certain source of all to find,

Determinant of matter and of mind,
In number, with its wide and wondrous range
Of subtle properties, its secrets strange,
Its squares and cubes, its composites and primes,
Its roots profound, its figurate that climbs
To high infinitude, its boundless sweep
Of logarithmic mystery, its deep
And dark recesses, whither those proceed
Whom Diophantine Analytics lead.
For sure it is that thought itself depends
On balance and proportion, and the ends
Of life are fixed, and all we say and do,
Each word we speak, each purpose we pursue
Determined is (as every tyro knows,
Who, seeking truth, to observation goes,
And from effects to causes strives to reach),
Just by the manner and degree in which
The myriad particles our heads contain
Arrange and shape themselves within the brain.
Thus harmony productive is of will
As well as of dull matter; and the skill
To search and know the hidden things of life
Is but the product of atomic strife,
That, through affinities, by chance evolved

Progressive concord. So may now be solved
Those lofty problems mites are wont to place
In regions supernatural, and trace
To powers above; for where true science leads
Therefrom the verdict ultimate proceeds:
From number and from motion issues all
That mites are wont 'morality' to call.

"Thus from the primal impact, passing down
The path of progress, come we to the crown
Of all development, the highest stage
Of evolution—product of an age
That far excels all epochs gone before
In culture, thought, and scientific lore;
The highest stage—yet through a wondrous train
Of causes linked, as by unbroken chain,
To that first stroke, when atom atom met
In fray fortuitous, and forthwith set
In motion all the sleeping streams of force,
Those complex currents by whose onward course
Are shaped—for such the last result we find—
The forms of matter and the thoughts of mind.
With ease the philosophic eye may trace,
Through all its upward path in time and space,
This evolution, from primordial root,

The issues of the primal impact.

Through stem and branches, up to flower and fruit.

The progress of condensation.

"For as we through the lens of science gaze
Back on the fluxion of the primal haze,
Thicker and more compact the mist appears,
Condensing here and there in dewy tears.
And then, by process lasting ages through,
Behold the nebula recedes from view,
And, lesser far in magnitude, at last
The whole transformed, is into fluid cast.
And now surcharged with sempiternal force,
That in the primal impact had its source,
And with the stream of progress flowing on,
Continued still when all the mist was gone,
This fluid, foaming with unceasing surge,
And whirling as opposing currents urge,
In that wild tumult, whose chaotic throes
Already I have striven to disclose
By such faint pictures as our thought may reach,
That clothes itself in hueless forms of speech,
At last a semi-solid mass became,
And shaped itself,—a spongy cosmic frame.
And this in turn, still charged with subtle force,
Grew more compact, until the outer course
Or layer of the sphere to crust was changed;

And then the power mysterious arranged
Those mountain ridges, and those valleys deep,
Those level steppes, those uplands long and steep,
That mark the surface erewhile plain and smooth,
Now scarred and seamed, as by remorseless tooth
Of some strange monster that has on it preyed,
And marred the beauty in which first 'twas made,
Or rather self-evolved. Thus, working still,
The primal energy shaped dale and hill,
And so our world at last was fitted quite
To be the habitation of the mite.

"Nor even yet was spent the hidden power
That thrilled our cosmos in its natal hour,
For forthwith on the surface of the world,
Amidst the rocks and stones that had been hurled
In wild confusion by the latest throes,
Whence all our features geologic rose,
It bubbled up in forms unknown before,
In trees umbrageous, and in flowers that bore
Sweet light-winged fragrance, and in plants that cast
Their seeds and fruits, all ripened, to the blast
That hurried on, to carry far and wide,
To clothe the valley and the mountain-side
With ever springing verdure, fresh and green,

The formation of flora and fauna.

And deck with beauty all the naked scene.
And then it burst in myriad types of life;
And pressing onward, in its endless strife,
Through lower shapes, which first its vigour thrilled,
It nobler forms with animation filled;
Creating structures, intricate, complex,
Varieties of genus, species, sex,
Evolving every class, and kind, and brood—
Winged, hoofed, and finny, dwellers in the wood,
And beasts that range the plains, and fish that make
Their habitat in river, sea, and lake.
For pressing all the *protozoa* through,
Nematoneura vitalizing too,
And then the *heterogangliata* past,
And *homogangliata* reached at last,
This force original its power displayed
In wondrous frames *hæmatocryal* made,
And in *hæmatothermal* creatures found,
A base from which to take its final bound
To highest forms of sentient life; for now
Its never-flagging energies endow
A special class of beings—cunning elves,
In all but intellect just like ourselves.
And these, by struggle, in acquirements grew,

Until at last the mite appeared to view—
The crown of all, the all-transcending stage,
The perfect product of a perfect age.
"And how the mite progressed, no need to tell; The growth of culture.
Our onward march the learned know full well.
Enough to say, that from the primal force
Sprung streams that nourished, in its upward course,
Our culture, growing from that simple state,
In which, as early legends all relate,
The race was nurtured in its infant stage,
To that high eminence that marks our age—
A perfect culture, laden with the fruit
That springs from evolution's fertile root;
Our arts industrial, from which we gain
The power we wield o'er nature's wide domain;
Our polity progressive, head and heart
Of diplomatic and of ruling art;
Our social fabric, reared by slow degrees,
Triumphant now in elegance and ease;
Our science physical, that gives the key
To mystery of all we feel and see;
Our *belles lettres*, the blossoms fair and fruit
That from the golden stem of genius shoot;
Our high æsthetic arts, that lustrous shine,

And raise our taste, and all our thought refine;
Our sage philosophy of right and wrong,
Help of the weak, and bridle of the strong;
And, last of all, and yet of all the crown,
That, flowing from the primal impact down,
Have by the force original been shaped,
And in the forms of thought and matter draped,
Our subtle metaphysic now appears,
Ripe product of a myriad of years,
The last and highest victory of thought,
The latest gain by evolution brought;
For now we pierce within the outer shell
Of being and phenomena, and tell
The whence and how of all.

The ancient faith exploded.

"And now afar,
Quenched in the ocean like a falling star,
On truth's horizon sinks the fitful light
Whose phantom gleam has dazzled oft the sight
Of weakling visionaries, prone to stray
Where'er faith's 'will-o'-wisp' has led the way.
Like gibbering ghosts, the superstitions fly,
The mists of error vanish from the sky;
No longer need to think of any god,
Creating, shaping, by a potent nod,

The things that are; for everything we trace
Back to that primal impact in the space
By timeless atoms filled: in this we find
Original of every mode of mind
And form of matter. And since now in us
Pure thought has bloomed and ripened, even thus
To clear self-consciousness at last has come
The force original. No longer dumb,
The real god now speaks. And who is he
To whom the mite may fitly bend the knee?
Not he indeed to whom your grand-dames vowed,
Not he before whose shrines the past has bowed;
For of such deity, the grave, truth delves—
The god no other is than you yourselves."

BOOK VII.

The ovation.

THE speaker stopped; and loudly rang applause
From croaking throats and sharply clapping claws.
A sense of lofty dignity inspired
Each swelling heart, and every bosom fired.
High thought was this! that to the rank sublime
Of deity each mite with ease could climb;
Nay, had no need to climb, for logic good
Affirmed that on the giddy height he stood
Already deified! The power of thought
Apotheosis now had to him brought.
No longer need he grovel in the dust,
No longer place in god unseen his trust;
Self-knowledge freed him from the fetters strong
Of degradation, which had chafed him long.
The gate of liberty now opened wide,
From superstition's shadow forth, with pride,
He issue might. No temple now nor fane,
Abode of bigotry, need e'er restrain

His ardent spirit's flight. From henceforth free,
No need to bend, or head, or heart, or knee,
To sombre mystery. Such thoughts as these
The fancy captivate, the self-pride please.
No marvel then that, dazzled by the gleam
Of dignity that holds the place supreme
In Being's scale, and joying much to be
From all the trammels of religion free,
The listening mites accept, with loud acclaim,
The theory self-flattering, and name,
With voice unanimous, the subtle sage
The greatest benefactor of his age.

The debate.

With voice unanimous?—well, scarcely so,
From one at least there came a feeble "No."
A venerable mite, with aspect grave,
Arose, a moment's audience to crave;
And, silence granted, said:

The subtle question.

"Suppose 'tis true
That all we feel and all that meets our view
Of mind and matter, substance, shape, and mode
Have from the force original down flowed,
And to the primal impact must be traced,
And there their very *raison d'etre* placed;
Yet 'seems to me, you cannot from your scheme

Discharge the God, and make an empty dream
Of all theology. You but remove
The problem further back, and fail to prove
The Maker non-existent. Ask we now,
From whence the force original, and how
The primal impact happened? Can you tell
The What or Who, through channel dark, so well,
To lofty ends, blind powers has wisely led?
Or how, if true what science oft has said—
That out of nothing, nothing e'er was brought—
From forces unintelligent have thought
And allthe modes of consciousness emerged?"
His questions asked, he nervously absterged
The sweat upon his brow, and sat him down;
Whilst murmurs of impatience and the frown
Of the presiding mite were tokens plain
Of condemnation and of keen disdain.
Some cried, "Don't answer;" others hissed aloud,
"The antiquated fossil;" and the crowd
Of grave philosophers full soon became
A fiery mob. For, fanned from spark to flame,
Their virtuous indignation's ruddy glow,
Roaring and crackling, swayed them to and fro.
To what excess their anger might have led

'Twere hard to tell.

But all disorder fled, The philosophic response.
When rose with solemn mien the learned mite,
And waved his claw attention to invite.
Amazed at such interrogations rude,
With haughty upturned lip, he frowning stood;
A moment's doubt, then said, with gesture bold:
" By act of philosophic faith, I hold
This primal movement, in some happy hour,
By sudden self-originating power
Has taken place. This force a god indeed
No other can to philosophic creed
An entrance find; for if there other be,
He is not that which we can touch or see:
We know him not by any sense we find,
Howe'er acute, in body or in mind.
Let who will dogmatize, but be it ours
To keep within the limits of our powers;
And what we wholly fail to recognize
Let not our superstitious awe devise.
For if there be such God, you surely own
He must have power to make His presence known
To those whom He creates, nor will He leave
Them void of power His presence to perceive.

Beyond the limits of the felt or known,
No mite of wisdom will existence own.
What know we, then? We know that atoms urged
By sudden force collided: thence emerged
The primal link of evolution's chain,
From which, outwinding in continuous train,
Have come, without a single break or flaw,
Advancing surely by progressive law,
The essence and phenomena of all
That can within the ken of science fall.
And in the circle thus by science swept,
As ages long keen vigil she has kept,
From reason's watchtower peering all around,
No god appears, no deity is found.
Why search then for a god?

The first fallacy refuted.

"'Tis said, indeed
(And thus the theosophic think their creed
To found on reason's base, secure and broad),
That e'en the very concept of a god
Divine existence proves. For such they hold
Phenomena are powerless to unfold
To minds of mites; and hence the very thought
Direct from Deity Himself is brought.
Strange reasoning forsooth! as if beyond

The mental circle, there must correspond
Reality without, to every vain
And fickle fancy hatched within the brain.
No proof there is, that what our minds conceive,
And those ideas which we ofttimes weave
From subtle threads—the warp and woof of thought,
In plenty to the loom of fancy brought
By sensitive sensation—likeness show
To those external objects whence they grow.
Nor can we argue, from effect within,
The nature of the outer cause akin
To that which, from its impress on the brain,
In thought and feeling, minds of mites retain.
Why search then for a god?

"Though others say, The second fallacy refuted.
Our world and we marks of design display,
That tell the working of creative hand,
And prove our cosmos and its dwellers planned
By Architect divine.

"Yet were this so,
'Twould not the being nor the wisdom show
Of such a God, as these vain dreamers frame—
A God for whom they all perfections claim.
'Twould only to the meagre issue lead

That He, on whose behalf they plaintive plead,
Is but a Being of a better grade,
A little higher than the things He made.

The third fallacy refuted.

"But why a God at all? Why prate of laws,
How each effect necessitates a cause,
And argue, 'Therefore Maker must there be,'
When in this Maker uncaused cause we see?
An uncaused cause! Pray, if you ask me how
The primal impact came, may not I now
With ease retort, 'Whence came this uncaused cause?'
'Who made this Maker?' For if nature's laws
Be absolute—and such they seem to be—
An uncaused cause is an anomaly—
A sophism and paradox combined,
Whether the cause be matter or be mind."

The ready retort.

Upsprang the mite, whose doubt had raised the din
Of wordy war the conclave wise within,
And thus he spoke:
"If such be *now* alleged,
Is not your argument then double edged?
It cuts both ways; it finds no place at all,
Within the circle of the rational,
For either uncaused God or uncaused mist:

It contradicts, as well eternalist
As theosophist, and it both involves
In difficulties, which no reason solves."
"Yea, so it is," the other quickly said. The sufficient rejoinder.
"To what advantage, then, have babblers led
Who tell us of a God? No aid they give,
The mystery of why we are and live,
To penetrate and clear. For though they prate
Of reaching to a Cause whence inchoate
The whole pleroma, filling space and time,
And name this Cause a God—unique, sublime,—
Yet clouds and haze surround their foolish dream,
As dense as to their purblind vision seem
To shroud and swathe my scheme. For when they claim
To ask me, 'Whence the primal impact came?'
And I, 'Whence came your God?' in turn demand,
On faith, not reason, then they take their stand.
Nor is their faith of philosophic kind,
As that which fills the scientific mind
When glancing back to prehistoric age;
It seeks to reason from the outspread page
Of nature now observed, what may have been,
And may have taken place in times unseen

By eyes of mites : their's, faith but fancy fed,
And never by the hand of reason led.
Far wiser we, who argue from the known
How through the æons things have shaped and grown ;
By evolution lifted from the rude
And formless mist, to high ideal good—
Ideal, clasped in Being's inmost fold,
And slowly through the timeless past unrolled
In multiplex phenomena, by force
That hatched it first, then guided all its course.
The present, then, and not the past, supplies
The object which in philosophic eyes
True reverence may claim : no God unseen
But what is plainly manifest, I ween.
Let others wander in an empty chase,
To find a hidden God in time and space ;
Keep we to that we know, to that we see.
In this at least all scientists agree,
That keenly scanning to remotest bounds
The sphere whose limits Being's shadow rounds,
In all the wide expanse, both near and far,
Than we ourselves no other gods there are."

The dialectic triumph.

He ceased, and instant, from the assembled crowd,
Burst forth wild plaudits, pealing long and loud.

Again and yet again the tumult rose—
Sweet incense to the philosophic nose ;
For, bowing with delight, the *savant* stood
Accepted prophet of the brotherhood.
His rival, vanquished in the eyes of all,
And scorned alike by pundits great and small,
With plaintive, pleading air, essayed in vain
Amid the din a little space to gain,
To make reply ; for often as he rose,
So often, resolute, his mouth to close,
The frenzied mites renewed their mad uproar,
And shouts and counter-shouts the welkin tore.
Some hoarsely screamed, " Down with the blockhead, down ! "
And others, " Gag the superstitious clown ! "
O'erpowered and silenced, from the scene he fled,
Nor ever after dared to lift his head
Amongst the learned. Thus was made an end
Of arguments constructed to defend
The olden faith ; and thus were routed quite
The dull fanatics, who to new-born light
Of philosophic culture, and of thought,
Self-named " advanced," their antique rushlights brought,

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BOOK VIII.

'TWOULD be a lengthy tale to tell of all
That hastened on the sad decay and fall
Of that old faith, so long by mites professed,
Under whose shade so many had been blessed;
And how the powers iconoclastic reigned,
Till not a vestige of the creed remained.
But 'tis enough the progress quick to trace
Of that new pagan cult that took its place,
And so to pave the way toward the end
To which these strange historic annals tend.

The decay of the ancient faith.

Abroad to east and west, to north and south,
With eager impulse borne from mouth to mouth,
The tidings of "the latest phase of thought"
To every land, to every ear were brought—
A fair philosophy, which, as it spread,
To universal jubilation led,
So flattering to all the mity kind,
And yet so fit for scientific mind.

The progress of the new cult.

'Twas nowise wondrous that from every tongue
The praises of the keen discoverer rung,
Who, pressing forward into regions new,
Had brought the hidden mystery to view.

The favourable reception by the press.

His sage and subtle speech was broadcast sown,
Translated into every language known,
And suited to the genius of the age
By long and learned notes on every page.
It gained applause throughout the public press:
The "dailies" there and then began to bless;
The "weeklies" followed with profuser praise;
The "monthlies" crowned the author with the bays;
And then the "quarterlies" took up the theme,
And with due dignity, which writers deem
Befitting best the *dilettante* strain
In all its dull decorum to maintain,
These "organs of opinion" weighty, grave,
In solemn tones, their *imprimatur* gave.
Next pamphlets, dowered with dialectic strength,
Profound in depth, and infinite in length,
In philosophic, labyrinthine style
(For nomenclature wits are wont to pile,
Like Ossa upon Pelion, till they scale
The heaven of truth, and rest within its pale),

Came pell-mell pouring from the panting press,
That groaned o'erburdened with the new excess
Of literary lore, aid to bestow
To spread the doctrine 'mongst the high and low.
And even books were penned, and published too,
Crown and octavo, bound in red and blue,
And swelled with vast appendices and notes,
And rare citations, such as learning quotes
To prove its erudition's wide extent;
They seemed to reach this strange predicament,
That burst they must their bindings all to bits,
Or die at last of apoplectic fits;
And these, with ponderous arguments prepared,
In favour of the latest cult declared.
Their authors, laden with inductive lore,
Full charge against the ancient dogmas bore;
Denied that aught could lie beyond the sphere
Which to the brain the senses six made clear,
And laughed when told that many things might be
Not dreamt of in their sense-philosophy;
Professed by crucible, and rule, and scale,
The deepest essence clasped in Being's pale
Exact to test, to measure, and to weigh
And so discover by their keen assay:

Hence poured the vials of contempt supreme
On all who dared defend the antique dream
Of deity; and stigmatized as weak
Who of the "Great Artificer" to speak
Made venture, or the "Master Builder" named,
Or held the world as by "Creator" framed.
Such names as these were but the poor disguise
Of pious ignorance; the truly wise
Discarded them; and if a name must be
To designate the inmost Entity,
'Twere better far to title nature's course
The "Vast Momentum" or the "Constant Force;"
Or, best of all—a name none might dispute—
The god of science—"Mighty Evolute."

The entrance of the new cult to the universities.

And now the new-born cultus far and near
Continued still its conquering career.
And, borne in triumph by its advocates,
It reached at last the dull and dingy gates
Of universities, and passing through,
Appeared a prodigy—a something new—
Waked up professors, dozing in their chairs,
To extra-mural mites, and their affairs
Till then oblivious. And thereupon,
Rehearsing all the reasons, *pro* and *con*,

Grave beards and learned heads began to nod,
As doubtful of the being of a God;
And disquisitions, daring in their flight,
Through darkened atmosphere to clearer light
Professing each to pierce, were gravely penned,
And gravely spoken. Wit and wisdom blend
Their aid to give, and from the union came
Fresh thoughts and theories; with loud acclaim
Hailed by the plaudits of ingenuous youth,
Who, worshipful before the shrine of truth,
To professorial chairs sweet incense burn,
And yield in homage head and heart in turn.

The development of the new cult.

Said some, "'Tis plain that only through the mite
Can deity himself e'er reach the light
Of self-cognition; for till form is found,
And round the soul divine a body wound,
The essence must impersonal remain,
And never can to consciousness attain."

Then others argued, that since to the soul
The form must added be to make the whole,
And since the race of mites the form supplies,
Devoid of which the god for ever lies
In nothingness, 'twas valid to infer
That mites themselves the god-creating were.

"Yea, that is true," most sagely answered those
Who strove all thoughts theistic to oppose;
"And yet no finite form can ever be
The body of infinite Entity.
So must we patient wait until our race
Has grown unlimited in time and space:
Till then no higher being shall we own,
Nor worship other than the mite alone."

The establishment of mite-worship.

Now, this prevailing over all at last
Mite-worship was established, firm and fast,
As that high cult to which the ripest thought
United to the richest learning brought;
And praised by grave authorities, who reigned
Supreme in seats of learning, now it gained
Wide currency, and from the learned class
It filtered down, and leavened all the mass.
Its proselytes in every land appeared,
And, filled with fresh enthusiasm, reared
Fanes, shrines, and altars, sacred to the rites
That proper seemed for mites who worshipped mites,
And stately minsters, in whose solemn shade
Full proclamation of the creed was made.
Thus, propagated all the world through,
Its fascinating doctrines to imbue

Each rank and class began. And soon 'twas told
The new had turned the scale against the old;
For converts, by mysterious power impelled,
From tens to hundreds, and to thousands swelled,
And these ere long to thronging millions grew,
If not to billions—for none ever knew
To what extent the race had multiplied,
And none to take the census ever tried.
So now, the old faith being on the wane,
The new made bold the mastery to gain.
Its hierarchs contrived, with subtle skill,
To sway the fickle people to their will;
Till, yielding to the popular demands,
Here kings and princes issued strict commands,
There parliaments and senates edicts framed,
Establishing mite-worship, and proclaimed
The churches of the states henceforth to be
The churches of the new theology;
And all their rich endowments set apart,
The new to further, and the old to thwart;
Enjoined the clergy straight to change their creed,
And for the faith established now to plead.
'Twas hard, indeed, that this should be their fate!
But then, state churches, churches are of state;

And national establishments must be
Expressions of the nation's piety;
The people's will, the sovereign's command,
Determine must what creed shall fall or stand.
And 'tis but just that those who take the hire,
And to be servants of the state aspire,
Should yield their time, their talents, and their skill
To carry out their great paymaster's will.
Some few indeed forsook both place and pay,
Unfit the shrewd chameleon-part to play;
But these were straight-laced fools, who seemed to hold
That conscience should be neither bought nor sold:
The vast majority, full well content,
Preferred the blessings of establishment.

The decadence of dissent.

When thus mite-worship had usurped the place
Which once the ancient faith was wont to grace,
The latter lurked awhile, and refuge sought
With mites whose souls the state-gold had not bought.
But, sternly frowned upon by those in power,
It sunk in prestige, till it had to cower
In haunts obscure; and wealth, and rank, and pride,
And fashion, and the swimmers with the tide
Of popular applause, its rites forsook,

And to its rival's shrines themselves betook.
Its devotees were made the sport of wit;
Press, platform, pulpit, all began to twit,
And jibe, and satirize the motley crew,
Who to the olden creed continued true;
Whilst those who throned in lofty places sat,
High churchly dignitaries, sleek and fat,
Denounced as dangerous and pestilent,
The vulgar "dogmatism of dissent."

Yet toleration for a time prevailed, The toleration of dissent.
And none by persecution were assailed;
For where "high culture" holds benignant sway,
The finer feelings there come into play—
Broad sentiments of clemency, that give
To those who differ liberty to live.
Schismatic mites had therefore cause to be
Full thankful for that cultured charity,
So sweetly reasonable, that content
It bore the foul existence of dissent.
Ground of complaint they surely could have none,
Since nought 'gainst life or liberty was done;
Whilst 'twas but fitting, if those better bred,
On whom the modern cult its grace had shed,
Transformed to mites of nobler, purer mould,

And higher worth, as clay excelled by gold,
Should ostracize them from their social set,
And look askance upon them when they met,
With care from posts of profit should exclude,
And of their honours and their rights denude;
For cess ecclesiastical, should seize
Their goods and chattels, and their plaintive pleas
Of conscience should deride, as plainly seen,
To be but outburst of sectarian spleen.

The extinction of dissent.

But golden summers cannot always last,
So this sweet tolerance was soon o'erpast,
And winter darkened down. There came a time
When nonconformity was made a crime.
For arrogance with strength pressed hand in hand,
As more prevailed the cult in every land;
Its leaders grew less patient of dissent,
And on extermination more intent;
Firm to their cause, the civil power they gained,
And then o'er mite-dissenters terror reigned.
For, driven from their chapels and their homes,
And forced to wander where the wild beast roams,
In dingy caves conventicles they held,
Yet e'en from such retreats were soon expelled;
And, to their haunts by fire and sword pursued,

Full oft the waste was with their blood bedewed.
Nor refuge found they in the barren wild,
Nor in the densely shadowed forest smiled
A better fortune on them: day by day,
With rapid strides still hast'ning on decay,
Disease and carnage dogged their steps where'er
They shelter sought and safety; till there were,
Through persecution, but a remnant left.
And these at last of liberty bereft,
And all within strong prison walls immured,
The grisly terrors of the law endured.
For to convert them, or by hook or crook,
The Holy Inquisition undertook;
And set itself to work with hearty will,
Not lacking either energy or skill;
By rack and pincers, thumbscrew, boot, and scourge,
To timely penitence began to urge;
Hoped they might see "the error of their ways,"
Conform at last, and pass in peace their days.
But all in vain; nor torture, nor advice,
Nor pains of hell, nor sweets of paradise,
Those suffered now, these promised as relief,
Sufficed to make them change their old belief;
And so at length when every plan was tried,

Forth they were dragged, and quickly crucified.
The universal acceptance of the new orthodoxy.
This "easy method with dissenters" done,
The field at last was absolutely won.
No voice gainsaid, no jarring murmur rose,
No ignoramus ventured to oppose
With rude unreasoning tongue, when learned mites
Maintained the thesis of the sacred rights
Of worship to the race-ideal due,
And called their creed indubitably true.
For perfect unanimity prevailed;
No traitor thought, no doubting word assailed
The new-fledged orthodoxy; now at last
The era of credulity was past,
And come the diamond age of crystal thought—
The rich resultant, patiently outwrought
By brooding reason from the precious ore
Which keen-eyed science to her storehouse bore.
No longer error found a lurking place,
Nor faith's dull legends held in thrall the race;
For, as befitted such a lofty stage,
Precision marked the spirit of the age.
And but as far as thought and science led,
Thus far, no further creeds, confessions sped;
And none beyond the bounds which reason set

E'en by a single hairsbreadth sought to get.
'Twas therefore nowise strange if dogma swayed
Those who 'gainst dogma most of all inveighed;
For every doctrine by their lips confest,
Of keenest scrutiny, could stand the test;
And ever was their boast, "We but believe
What reason's undimmed vision may perceive."
And so was reached at last the highest goal,
The end for which the scientific soul,
Aspiring, still had sought, when that alone,
Which ruled with reason's sceptre, held the throne
Of reverence in the heart; and homage found
Its fitting object in the certain round
Of things observed and known; and faith was free
From haze of theologic mystery,
Or metaphysic mist, and stood secure
On positive foundations, safe and sure.
For now 'twas firmly fixed in every mind,
And held assured by all the mity kind—
Become at length an axiom indeed,
An evident first principle of creed;
A simple fact, scarce needing any proof,
Nor any argument in its behoof,
Since none its verity to question brought,

Or urged against it aught in word or thought,—
That crowned o'er all, in everything supreme,
Beyond compare, and worthy all esteem
Of mind and heart, the mite, the mite alone
Secure possession held of nature's throne.
Nay, further still, with general consent,
The oracles of "light and leading" went,
For some there were who ventured to insist
Than mites no higher being *could* exist.
And by this sweetly self-complacent thought,
To matchless self-appreciation brought,
The race unanimous, and satisfied,
To press beyond, no longer hoped or tried;
But come at last into the perfect light,
They worshipped only the Ideal-Mite.

BOOK IX.

Good Pastor Gibb came back from Holy Land, The pastor's return.
His beard grown rugged, and his visage tanned;
Came back, rejoicing in a giant's strength,
His hair, like Samson's, in its unshorn length;
Passed, homeward bound, the half of Europe through
From east to west, with hurried glance to view
Its fairest scenes and cities: these surveyed,
Fit ending to his pilgrimizing made.
But thus returning, lo! surpassing strange!
There o'er his nature crept a subtle change;
His dual spirit slowly disappeared,
As, by degrees, his journey's end he neared,
Till double consciousness departed quite,
And from his mind, as well as from his sight,
There failed and faded all the busy scene
Of which erewhile he had spectator been,
And mites and their affairs were swept away
Clean from the tablets of the memory;

As if, in Lethe's waters wholly plunged,
The record had for ever been expunged.
No trace nor relic now remained to tell
Whence sprung, how multiplied, and what befell
The world of mites; their theories and thoughts
Were buried, with their schemes and plans and plots,
In dark oblivion. The pastor's mind,
Unconscious of its loss, sought not to find
Or puzzling problem, or solution sage,
Unveiled before him in his pilgrimage;
And all events, his "second sight" had seen,
Were now to him as if they ne'er had been.

The pastor's guest.

Now all the perils of his journey o'er,
He reached at last, in peace, his natal shore.
There, disembarked, his sister's son he met—
Stout farmer, from the wolds of Somerset—
Across the country come, to take by storm
His reverend relative, with welcomes warm;
To bear him company as north he went,
On reaching home and friends and flock intent;
To cheer his loneliness with pleasant jest;
And for a time to make himself his guest.

The home-coming feast.

So these two from the port sped on their way;
And reached the manse just at the close of day;

Passed through the porch pierced in the privet hedge,
With appetites as keen as razor's edge;
Knocked at the door; and ere the sound had died,
'Twas by the faithful Betty opened wide.
A greeting warm, a kindly question asked,
And both before the glowing fire-gleam basked.
The blinds were drawn, the argand lamps were lit;
And chickens roasting on the kitchen spit,
With pleasant fragrance, greet the hungry pair,
And promise give of toothsome dainty fare.
The table spread with cloth of dazzling white
Confirms the promise, to their 'raptured sight:—
Veal pie and ham, with loads of snowy bread
By Betty baked; sweet tubers, white and red,
All smoking hot; crushed sugar, fleecy cream,
That patient wait the rare dessert's regime;
And on the side-board, raisins, walnuts, wine,
And blushing apples, grapes of purple vine;
And crowning all, as certain most to please,
A ripened lump of lively Cheddar cheese.
So set to work, with right good will, these two—
The pastor good, the farmer stout and true.
With knife and fork siege to the pie they laid,
And 'mongst the chickens wondrous havoc made;

Assailed the ham, and, after gallant fight,
Reduced it, bringing to a woeful plight;
Courageous captures made in every dish,
And seized as much as hungry souls could wish.
Then, when the campaign's sterner toils were o'er,
They rung for Betty, and she gave them more--
Some lighter trifles, that a like fate met.
These overcome, she on the table set
The grapes and raisins, walnuts, wine, and cheese,
For after skirmishing, in leisured ease.

The attack on the Cheddar.

Across the field the pastor cast his eye,
Then forward bent, with loud triumphant cry:
"Why, George my boy, there's still a remnant here
Left of the cheese you made and sent last year!
A relic rare! and see how full of life!
Ah! how my mouth does water! Come! the knife!
We'll make a sally on't."
The knife was passed.
And George said, "Good things cannot always last.
That took the prize last autumn at the show:
Some said, 'twas over-rich, and soon would go
Of its own will, where'er the spirit moved;
It seems to me as if their words were proved,
For how it moves and heaves!"

"'Twill move no more,"
The pastor answered, as the golden store
He plunged the knife in, seized the living pelf,
And shared the spoil betwixt George and himself.

The fate of the Cheddar.

How long they sat, 'twould scarcely do to tell;
What, and how much they ate and drank. Ah, well,
'Tis not quite etiquette to keep a note
Of all that passes down our neighbour's throat;
Yet must confession honestly be made,
That whilst in every dish the gustful raid
Made grievous havoc, so that at the close
From plate and board but sorry ruins rose,
O'er one more perfect still the victory gained,
For of the cheese no single scrap remained.

The farmer's sound somnolence.

The feast now ended, off they went to bed.
The farmer, almost ere he placed his head
Upon the pillow, closed his eyes in sleep,
And all night long lay locked in slumbers deep;
Before his brain no Puck his presence thrust,
He slept "the peaceful slumbers of the just;"
His deep-mouthed breathing through the silent hours
Proclaimed his freedom from all baleful powers
That trounce and torture, tantalize and tease
The conscience or the stomach ill at ease.

Obedient to the summons of his snores,
Kind Morpheus opened wide the ebon doors;
And 'ill the morn shone in, full bright and clear,
He passed not from the sleep-god's lethean sphere.

The pastor's grievous unrest.

But different far the luckless pastor's fate:
On him no ministering cherubs wait
With draughts of sweet nepenthe. All night through
Sleep's gentle influence he sought to woo;
Which, more pursued, the further from him fled.
In vain, he tossed and tumbled on his bed;
He tried in turn now this side, and now that,
Prone on his face, and on his back now flat;
The line diagonal, and then the straight,
Now at right angles, and then sinuate;
With head high-pillowed, void of calico,
Then night-capped to the ears, and buried low;
With all the sheets, and then without a stitch;—
'Twas all in vain: it did not matter which
The plan adopted, peace he could have none,
Nor from the slowly dragging night was won
A single hour of rest.

The return of the pastor's double consciousness.

For dire to tell
Some evil Genius cast a baleful spell
Upon the pastor's mind; and there and then

His double consciousness brought back again.
And as, by sudden lightning flash revealed,
Bursts on the view a scene by night concealed,
So burst upon the pastor's anguished soul
The Cheddar's fateful past. At once the whole,
From state primeval to the latest change,
That record finds within these annals strange,
Back to his memory came. His startled thought
The long historic vista pierced, and brought
Before his eyes again each fact and scene
That pictured on his "second sight" had been—
The joys and virtues of the golden age,
The gloomier annals of the later stage;
The ancient period of love and peace,
And then the hate and war when came increase;
The social progress ultimately made,
And all varieties of state and grade
That marked its slow advance, until there stood—
A mingled monument of ill and good—
Society, complete in every part,
Web warped, and woofed of nature and of art.
The pomp and circumstance of royal estate,
And all the pride and splendour of the great;
The vice and virtue of the higher ranks,

Of plutocratic parasites, the pranks,
The enterprise and industry of those
Who equal to each great occasion rose;
The woes and wailings of the weary wights—
Doomed drudges in the busy world of mites;
The growth of art, philosophy and law,
And culture, exquisite and void of flaw;
The steady strides of scientific lore,
And all the flower and fruit this progress bore;
The ancient faith, in former times esteemed,
The cultus later mites more worthy deemed;
The learned congress and the learned mite,
Joint causes of the coming of the light
Of that self-worth and worship—cult sublime—
The feature of the last and highest time;
All this, and more than tongue or pen can tell,
Recalled again by evil Genius' spell,
Before the pastor's mind stood forth unveiled,
And every single circumstance detailed
Within these faithful chronicles, once more
Enacted was his mental sight before.
And now o'erwhelming came the awful thought
Of grievous ruin by his feasting brought
On all the fabric of this wondrous world,

In one fell moment to destruction hurled:
The fall of monarchies, the overthrow
Of dynasties, that ages took to grow,
The crash of commonwealths, "the crack of doom,"
Involving in the darkness of the tomb
All ranks and races, peoples, classes, clans,
With all their culture, progress, projects, plans,
And quenching in the gloom of dreary night
All science-lore and philosophic light.

The vision of ghostly mites.

But worst of all—a sad and solemn train—
The ghosts of mites went wailing through his brain,
With weird reproachful looks, that all peace stole
His conscience from, and harrowed up his soul.
Some seemed to mourn the loss of high estate,
And others, moaning their untimely fate,
Made sore lament of purposes undone,
Of objects unattained, success unwon;
Some wandered, dumb-struck at their sudden change,
Not yet adjusted to the region strange
To which they had been brought; some deeply sighed;
And some, disconsolate, incessant cried,
In doleful tones, against the cruel fate
That drove them to this immaterial state.
Appalled, the pastor viewed the ghastly scene;

A second Dante he might well have been;
For on his ears there broke full many a wail,
And in his hearing told was many a tale
Of horror and dismay—the annals all
Of strange catastrophe and sudden fall.
And as the spectres passed before his eyes,
He saw how little 'twixt the fools and wise
Of difference exists; and how at last,
Each artificial barrier downcast,
Social distinctions all were swept away,
None cringing low, none claiming lordly sway.
With aimless air, a motley crowd, they glide,
Of crownless kings and beggars, side by side;
Of high and low, of opulent and poor,
The cultured noble and the simple boor;
Of soldiers, stripped of all their brave array;
And orators, with not a word to say;
Of politicians, who could not don
Their party cloak, "their occupation gone;"
Of statesmen, left without a state to rule;
And noble lords, still fit to play the fool,
But void of chance, for in these ghostly spheres
There did not seem to be a house of peers—
For all were *peers*, the prince and peasant too,

The common clod-pole, and the blood of blue;
Of philosophic mites, who sought to fit,
With the poor remnant of their former wit,
Their schemes and theories to that new state,
To dwell in which was now their cheerless fate;
Of scientists, who found that rule and scale
Without material could naught avail;
Of plutocrats, whose torment seemed to be
That whilst their ghostly eyes the vision see
Of treasured hoard, they vainly strive to clasp,
For ever it eludes their greedy grasp;
Of workers, wandering in wistful bands,
And gazing at their spectral idle hands
In dumb amazement, wondering to find
No aching body and no anxious mind.

Such was the crowd; but standing far apart, The end of the prodigy.
As if some woe weighed heavy on his heart,
Shunned by the others, fallen from his throne,
And forced his fallibility to own,
One ghost there was. And who that ghost might be
No need to mention more explicitly;
His aspect was enough: more wretched none,
Nor more crest-fallen, vanquished, and undone;
Despised of all, and doomed to ruminate,

In isolation, on his woeful fate,
Despair and fear his weary footsteps dog,
Whilst wand'ring in an ever-deepening fog.
Such seemed his penalty; and who shall dare
To call unjust what he was doomed to bear?

The pastor's accusing conscience.

But on the pastor's troubled soul there weighed
The thought of all the havoc he had made;
And as the spectres passed before his sight
Each seemed to blame him for untimely blight
Of life and fortune brought. From one and all
Reproachful looks of woe his heart appal.
In language none accused him, yet each glance
Pierced through and through his conscience, like a lance;
Some glared with eyes that gleamed vindictive fire,
Mysterious horrors fitted to inspire;
And others froze his being to the core
With fixed and stony looks that malice bore.
Thus haunted all the dreary darkness through,
And forced the ghostly scene of woe to view,
No wonder that the pastor failed to find
Rest for his body, easement for his mind;
No wonder that, his peace of conscience fled,
He turned, and tossed, and tumbled on his bed.

Like years in length appeared that weary night,
Whilst, longing, praying for the dawning light,
He moaning lay. Beyond this record's powers
To tell how much, and what in these long hours
His soul endured.

But all was well at length. The conclusion.
Ere yet was spent the pastor's waning strength,
The sun's glad rays burst in upon the scene,
And chased away the spectres who had been
The cause of all his woe. With thankful heart,
And nothing loth from such a scene to part,
At morn he rose, distracted, haggard, pale,
And to his wond'ring nephew told this tale.

THE END OF THE CHRONICLE.

MISCELLANEOUS PIECES.

I. ETCHINGS FROM NATURE.

DEDICATION.

TO ——.

A FEW fond fancies, measured into rhyme—
A pleasant task to pass the weary time,
A varied bouquet formed from nature's flowers,
Plucked in the idleness of leisure hours,
I dedicate to you. Not that I claim
The sacred title of a poet's name;
But that this token—'tis its greatest end—
May keep in memory a loving friend,
And in the years to come serve to recall
The sweetly pleasing memory of all
Our merry rambles over hill and dale,
In golden sunshine or in moonlight pale.
And while I strive to praise, in simple strain,
A landscape's beauties, still another claim
Will occupy my mind. Though not expressed,
Yet not forgotten, and by me loved best—
The sweetest specimen of nature's art,
A woman with a warm and tender heart.

THE HILLS.

CLAD in their native grandeur with stately majesty,
The pride of Caledonia, the stronghold of the free;
In wild fantastic beauty their cliff-scarred summits rise,
And here and there a lofty peak points upward to the skies.

One hill, like some proud monarch, towers far above the rest,
And bathes its forehead in the rays shed o'er the mountain's crest;
Like courtiers, humbly bowing before their monarch's face,
The little green-clad peaks arise, and cluster round its base.

Ravine and rock and precipice in unity combine
To stamp the scene as Scotland's own, majestic and sublime,

Each feature stern and rugged,—the crag of iron grey,
And barren cliff that shades the glen, where sparkling streamlets play;

Yet not entirely sterile, for 'midst the hilly scene
The hardy Scottish heather blooms, and oak with branches green,
The lofty pine, the hazel, and spreading ash combine
To blend the stern and beautiful, the pleasing and sublime.

THE WATERFALL.

FLOWING from the mountain-top,
Where the sunbeams love to rest,
Leaping down from rock to rock
O'er the craggy giant's breast;

Now from some wild tow'ring steep
Dashing down with snowy foam,
Spreading, in its fearless leap,
Spray among the mountain broom;

Then some chasm wild within,
Hid by jutting rocks from sight,
Plunging down with wrathful din
In a channel dark as night;

Gushing, gurgling, with a roar,
Through the rugged ravine rides;
Splashing, hissing, evermore,
As it leaps the rocky sides;

Springing ever eager on,
  Hast'ning to the glen below,
There to wander flowers among,
  And through leafy woods to flow;

Leaping from the mountain-top,
  O'er the craggy giant's breast,
Plunging down from rock to rock,
  In the vale it sinks to rest.

THE GLEN.

AWAY from the busy haunts of men,
Sweet is the quiet of the bosky glen;
Nothing is heard save the murm'ring stream,
The blackbird's song and the lapwing's scream.

Scarcely the leaves of the spreading trees
Are moved by the gently passing breeze;
And the sweet bluebells that bloom beneath,
Their petals spread to its genial breath.

The rays of the sun attempt in vain
The shady nooks of the glen to gain,
Where wild flowers blow by the brooklet's side,
And branches dip in the running tide.

And here, as if touched by fairy wand,
A garden planted by nature's hand,
Tilled by the seasons with gentle care,
Sheds its perfume through the balmy air.

Oft has been hallowed this leafy grove
By many a scene of mutual love;
And oft have sacred vows been made
In the quietness of its flowery shade.

No scene so fitted for love as this,
No scene so mingled with joy and bliss;
An emblem of what love's path should be—
With flowers bestrewn, and from sorrow free.

THE RIVULET.

CHEERILY wandering,
Never at rest,
Quietly meandering
On to the west;

Flowing on foamily
Through the bright hours,
Singing sweet melody
To the wild flowers;

Constantly whispering
In the still night,
Merrily glistening
In the moon's light;

Evermore murmuring
Through the lone glen,
Trickling and turning in
Meadow and fen;

Often-time tarrying
By fairy bower,
Moisture still carrying
To the wild flower;

Onward, blithe rivulet,
Flow to the sea;
Flow, gentle rivulet,
Joyous and free.

THE VALLEY.

A LOVELIER scene ne'er met the gazing eye
  Than yonder peaceful valley, lying low
Between the lofty hills, which o'er its face
  At morn and eventide their shadows throw.

The yellow cornfields with their rip'ning grain
  Like golden waves bend gently to the breeze;
The leafy hedgerows stretching o'er the land
  Enhance the prospect and the vision please.

A strip of woodland here and there is seen,
  With rustling leaves and branches waving slow;
Fresh grows the grass, and sweet the wild flowers bloom,
  Where little trickling streamlets dancing flow.

Throughout the valley, every swelling hill
  Is with some peasant's cheerful cottage crowned,
Or whitewashed farmhouse, scene of peaceful toil,
  With well-tilled acres stretching all around.

The busy rustics labour in the fields,
And cut with swinging scythe the ripened hay,
Or guide the patient steed that drags its load
And slowly trudges o'er the dusty way.

A peaceful lake scarce ruffled by the breeze
Lies dreamy, like a calm inverted sky:
A gentle river flowing from its shore
Winds like a silver cord beneath the eye.

The moving shadows of the floating clouds
Pass slowly o'er the sweetly placid scene,
Now resting softly on the leafy wood,
Now gently passing o'er the pastures green.

The cattle lowing by the river's side,
The children laughing at their merry play,
The skylark singing from his airy height,
The streamlet murm'ring o'er its pebbly way,

The water splashing down the mill-wheel's steps,
The zephyr rustling through the forest green,—
Break on the ear in mingled mellowness,
And breathe a quiet content o'er all the scene.

How sweet when tired and jaded here to dwell,
Secure from worldly cross and cank'ring care;
To ramble through the woods or by the streams,
And breathe the fragrance of the scented air.

To mingle with the rustics in the fields,
To cull the wild flowers by the river's brink,
To wander from the peep of dewy morn,
Till in the west the golden sunbeams sink.

O what a feast is here for human eyes!
O what a feast is here for human heart!
Such scenes once known remain for ever dear
And bitter is the pang if called to part.

THE WIND.

It whispers as it passes by,
And rustles through the trees;
It scarcely bends the yellow corn,
So gentle is the breeze.

It ripples all the little brook,
And flits across the heath;
Responsive to its genial power,
The woodland flowerets breathe.

It scatters from its fragrant wings
Fair nature's sweet perfume,
The wild flowers' dainty offering
To Him who made them bloom.

It bears aloft the fleecy cloud
That sails across the sky,
And sports with the morning minstrel
That merr'ly soars on high.

It wanders, sighing, through the wood,
And whistles down the glen;
Then unrestrained it flies away
Across the moorland fen.

With gentle breath it tempers oft
The sultry summer day,
And evening come, then silently
It passes far away.

THE CLOUD.

BORNE aloft on the wings of the wind,
It leaves the wide ocean far behind;
It comes over mountain, valley, and wood,
It comes for evil or comes for good.

It glances down from its airy height,
And casts its shade on the landscape bright,
Shielding the weary from noonday heat,
Or frowning on hearts that joyous beat.

It hushes the feathered warbler's note,
Chasing it home to its fairy cot,
Till, borne by the wind again away,
The sun shines forth with his genial ray

It spreads itself in a merry shower,
And sends sweet rain to refresh the flower,
To wash the dust from the tiny leaves,
And fill the cup that with joy receives.

It bends the stalk of the lily white,
Whose chalice brims with the rain-drops bright;
The meadow pastures it clothes in green,
And in fresh beauty decks all the scene.

It swells the river, and quickly fills
The brawling streams and the gushing rills,
That spread its waters over the plain,
Or bear them back to the sea again.

THE COTTAGE.

ALMOST hid by the clustering trees
That flourish around it green,
Snugly built in a sheltered nook,
Is the simple cottage seen.

A little garden, but neatly trimmed,
And filled with fairest flowers;
A fairy arbour, that forms a shade
From the sun of summer's hours;

A little streamlet, that whispering flows
Not far from the garden gate,
Where the livelong day the blackbirds sing,
And the linnet woos his mate;

The hawthorn tree, with its sweet perfume,
And the branching oak above,
Enshrine this home of a humble heart
In the depths of a leafy grove.

Save the thin blue smoke, that curls o'erhead
In wreaths through the summer air,
And the whitewashed walls, through fluttering leaves,
That are glancing here and there,

The little cottage is hid from view
In its quiet, secluded nook;
And nought disturbs save the chirping birds,
And the murm'ring of the brook.

'Tis just such a spot where one might dwell
From the cares of the world free,
Nor envy the lot of any one,
Whoever that one might be.

To home like this a lover might wish
To carry his trusting bride,
Where, happy and blest, they peacefully
On the stream of life might glide.

In such a haven a weary heart
Might a harbour find of rest,
And shrink from the selfish world beyond
To a little home so blest.

Not on the splendid palace alone,
Nor yet on the lordly hall,
May the truest happiness on earth
Or the sweetest pleasures fall;

For under the humblest cottage roof
May blessings as great abound,
As can in the shade of the palace,
Or in lordly hall, be found.

Then better by far than grandeur's weight,
And the hollow show of pride,
Is the simple, unpretending cot,
Where pleasure and peace reside.

THE RIVER.

It winding flows beneath the summer sun,
To life it springs on yonder distant lea ;
In haste its ceaseless waters onward run,
Eager to mingle with the restless sea,
Bidding farewell for ever, one by one,
To each wild flower and every leafy tree.

And slowly swelling, from the tiny stream,
Whose waters glisten in the bright sunbeam,
Wider and deeper as it onward flows,
From tiny stream to river broad it grows,
Increasing every hour in strength and force,
Soon like a conqueror pursues its course,
Till, swallowed in the ocean's greater flood,
Its tide forsakes the channel where it flowed.

How like is this to life. First childhood's hours,
So marked by weakness, yet so full of mirth;
This ripens into sterner manhood's powers;
And this to dark ambition gives its birth;
A fleeting triumph—then fair fortune lowers—
The conqueror is swallowed up in death.

THE OLD BRIDGE.

A STRUCTURE reared in days of yore,
And arched the brawling waters o'er;
A monument of hoary time,
O'er which the moss and ivy climb,
And hide from view its stonework grey,
Now crumbling quickly to decay.
Its picturesque, fantastic form
Has borne the shock of many a storm,
And oft withstood the angry sweep
Of rushing torrent wide and deep,
When, swollen high, the river's spate
Dashed madly down at rapid rate.

And still it stands, its sombre grey
All covered o'er with verdure gay;
Its arches rude, though once so strong,
Will not withstand the torrent long;

For now the loosened stones begin
To fall the river's channel in;
When flows the tide precipitate
Its pillars totter 'neath their weight,
Let stormy winter come again,
And swell the river high with rain,
The old bridge, picturesque and rude,
Will fall before the rushing flood.

THE OAK TREE.

"KING of the forest," with wide-spreading branches,
Tow'ring majestic in beauty and grace,
Unscathed by the storm that furious wrenches
Pine tree and fir from their deep-rooted base.
Long may it flourish green,
Lord of the forest scene,
Or by the river where broadly it grows,
Stretching its branches wide
Where the fast-running tide
On through the landscape fair ceaselessly flows.
Long may the hardy oak
Spared be the woodman's stroke,
Shade from the sunshine, and brave winter's snows.

Relic of yore, where in days now forgotten
Lovers have lingered when night's shades drew nigh,
Carving their names on the bark which, now rotten,
Falls from the hoary tree withered and dry.

Honour the old oak tree,
Though it may withered be;
Oft has it sheltered from winter's cold rain,
Oft been the trysting-place
Where beauty's winning grace
Conquered the heart of the amorous swain.
Relic of bygone days,
Worthy of poet's praise,
"King of the forest" it ever shall reign.

THE SEA.

STRETCHING as far as the eye can reach,
Meeting the blue of the distant sky,
Breaking in foam on the sandy beach,
And tossing its crested billows high.

Never at rest from morning till night,
Ruffled and heaving from shore to shore,
Catching the lines of the sunbeams bright
That are scattered its shimmering surface o'er.

Sparkling and radiant with crystal sheen
Spread on its waves by the falling rays,
Dazzling the eyes with the lustre keen
That over its broken azure plays.

Reflecting the sapphire vault above,
With the fleecy clouds that soar on high,
Till down in its dreamy depths below
Seems the concave of another sky.

Rolling and heaving before the wind,
And dashing its billows far and wide,
Or calmly at rest in summer kind,
Save ripples caused by the flowing tide;

In storm or in calm no nobler sight
Than the boundless surface of the sea,
Sparkling with gems from the sunbeams' light,
Or tossing its waves in tumultuous glee.

THE BEACH.

BETWEEN the tender green that decks the fields
And yon dark blue that stretches o'er the main,
There lies the yellow beach, its golden sands
A contrast fair to sea and fertile plain;

A long bright line, but broken here and there
By rugged rocks that stand against the sea—
Stern frowning bulwarks, which in winter's storms
The angry waves assault with savage glee;

A long bright line, o'er which the restless tides
Sweep with a rising swell and break in foam,
Or falling, swift retreat, as if again
Some power recalled them to their ocean home.

The lonely music of the moaning waves
In murmurs to the sighing wind replies;
Now pealing loud, assails the listening ear,
Now falling low, in stilly silence dies.

Such is the melody that ever swells
Along the beach in sweetly pleasing strain,
Like the last echoes of some mournful song,
Sung by the ocean nymphs far o'er the main.

Some spirit seems to chant in hollow tones
Of distant lands, and friends whom wide seas part,
Of weary wand'rers tossing on the deep,
Who still retain the fond love of the heart;

And to the mind recurs the fading past,
The happy hours that have for ever fled,
Hours hallowed by the faces and the forms
Of those who now are far away or dead.

The past, the present, and the future seem
To rise before the mind in colours bright;
Called by the magic moaning of the sea,
They pass like fleeting visions of the night.

THE WOOD.

WILD and entangled, as if nature's aim
Had been to give Disorder here a scene,
Where it might undisturbed and lawless reign,
And 'midst confusion make its presence seen,
Assert its rights fantastic, and displace
Whate'er produces symmetry or grace.

Wild and entangled—but will any say
There is no beauty in the leafy wood,
When summer clothes it in its colours gay,
Or winter strips it bare, with tempest rude?
Will any say the budding of the spring
Or autumn's russet is no pleasant thing?

Wild and entangled—but in beauty bright
Clad by the varied seasons in their turn:
In spring the bursting buds the eye delight,
In genial summer blossoms fair adorn;

In autumn's withered leaves there is a charm,
And grand the scene produced by winter's arm.

But fairest scene of all, when bright and clear
  The sun of summer glances from the sky,
When clad in richest green the trees appear,
  And every verdant tint delights the eye;
'Tis then the woods in rarest beauty glow,
And seem a very paradise below.

The nodding branches of the trees entwine,
  And link each other in a close embrace;
The rustling leaves and blossoms fair combine
  To give this freakish bond a certain grace;
The genial summer breeze that passes by
Swells through between them with a gentle sigh.

Wherever turns the eye, whate'er the view,
  Leaves everywhere in wild profusion grow;
And, trembling in the breeze, each varied hue
  Of softest green or richest russet show,
From thin transparence to the thickest shade
That throws its shadow o'er the silent glade.

High overhead the meeting branches form,
And summer graces with its fairest hue,
A lofty gothic arch, with leaves entwined,
Through which is scarce discerned the heaven's blue,
Or the light fleecy cloud that, floating high,
Relieves the azure of the distant sky.

The ground beneath is clad with verdure gay,
And wild flowers in profusion sweetly bloom;
While here and there a merry dancing ray,
Strayed from its fellows, brightens up the gloom
Made by the shadows which the green leaves throw
From the broad branches on the earth below.

Up the tall trees and o'er the sombre bark
The ivy creeps, as if to hide from sight
What else for such a scene had seemed too dark,
And thrown a shadow o'er the colours bright
That everywhere are blooming on the ground,
And shed their lustrous beauty all around.

Beside the wood a sparkling river flows,
On which, through leafy branches, sunrays gleam;

And when the wind athwart the branches blows
They dip their blossoms in the flowing stream,
Or, as its airy threads the breeze inweaves,
Shake off the dewdrops from their trembling leaves.

And breaking on the ear the merry notes
That through the waving wood from tree to tree
Are swelling from a thousand little throats,
And tell a thousand tales of artless glee,
A greater charm lend to the beauteous scene,
And fill both ear and soul with pleasure keen.

Wild and entangled—but 'tis here the heart,
When genial sunshine shimmers through the air,
Still loves to linger, and is loth to part
From waving branches and from foliage fair;
'Tis here the fancy still delights to stray,
Though winter stern succeed to summer gay.

THE RUINED CASTLE.

RUDE relic of the past, with ivy crowned,
And left a prey to time's destroying hand;
Ancient abode of storied chiefs renowned,
To whom like monuments its ruins stand.

Its lordly turrets, once their owner's pride,
Now furnish shelter for the screeching owl;
Strange are the sounds that echo far and wide
When midnight tempests round the ruin howl.

And now how sadly changed the spacious halls,
Once filled with beauty, chivalry, and grace;
How crazy now the once defiant walls,
A curse seems resting on the ancient place.

Re-people yet again, with fancy's aid,
The dismal ruin, once so bright and gay;
Bring back the scenes that have for ever fled,
And lead oblivion into genial day.

Sweet sings the minstrel in the castle hall,
Loud laugh the barons o'er the jovial cheer,
Light trip the fair ones at the courtly ball,
Soft speaks the lover in his lady's ear.

Shrill sounds the clarion—the call to arms,—
Loud clangs the armour, as the knights prepare;
For them the battle-field possesses charms
Above the peaceful home, or lady fair.

Low falls the drawbridge, wide the portals veer,
Proud from the castle rides each gallant knight;
The sun's rays glance upon the armour clear,
And plumes are nodding over helmets bright.

Again loud mirth resounds, loud laughter rings,
And notes of triumph break upon the ear;
The minstrel tunes his harp, of vict'ry sings,
And all forget their dangers as they hear.

The ladies mingle in the merry dance,
The knights join chorus in the jovial song;
Heart beats for heart, and glance replies to glance,
While love and happiness the feast prolong.

But all are gone—the lord and lady gay,
The hoary minstrel, and the belted knight;
Stilled are the sounds of joyous revelry,
Nor nods the plume, nor shines the helmet bright.

Gaunt, like a skeleton, the ruins rise,
Strong battlement and buttress crumbling fall,
Unhinged the gates, the drawbridge broken lies,
And ivy creeps along the old grey wall.

Rude relic of the past, proud grandeur's tomb,
The home of beauty, chivalry, and grace,
Now wrecked and ruined, the abode of gloom;
A curse has fallen on the ancient place.

THE VILLAGE BELL.

Now sinks the sun far in the west
'Midst gath'ring clouds of purple hue,
Its red rays glancing on the breast
Of yonder hill, whose lofty crest
Is towering far above the rest,
And mingling with the sky of blue.

Soft stillness reigns o'er all the scene,
The woodland warblers, sunk to rest,
No longer praise the smiling beam
That strikes athwart the forest scene,
And bathes in gold the branches green
Whose leaves o'ershade each little nest.

But hark! there break upon the ear,
And softly through the landscape swell,

Sweet sounds that are to many dear,
In tones melodious and clear,
Reverberating far and near—
The music of the village bell.

Enshrined in many a gallant breast;
Mayhap in some far distant clime
By war's harassing toils oppressed,
The weary soldier sinks to rest,
Dreams of the days of boyhood blest,
And hears again the village chime.

Or on the bosom of the deep,
When wrathful tempests loudly swell,
Borne on the crest of billows steep,
The wild winds round the vessel sweep,
And rock the sailor fast asleep,
While dreams recall the village bell.

In every land, in every clime,
Some wanderer holds in mem'ry dear
The music of that village chime,
That, gently tolled at eventime,
Swelled through the woods of beech and lime,
And softly fell upon the ear.

And now its sweetly swelling tones
  Proclaim the hours of labour done,
The weary cotters seek their homes,
No longer now the rambler roams,
For each the call of nature owns—
  To rest—since sinks the golden sun.

Sleep fairy flowers on bank and brae,
  In woodland grove and silent glen;
Hushed evening spreads her mantle grey
O'er all the scenes of nature gay,
And reigns supreme from close of day
  Till rosy morn shall come again.

THE CONCLUSION.

My task is done, if task it may be named
Which gave so much of pleasure. I have aimed
To bring, from varied sources, and to bind
The forms of beauty, which the eye may find
In many a lovely landscape. And although
The work accomplished may to critics show
Faults that are many, merits that are few,
Their lash I fear not, if it pleases you.
Accept it as the homage of a heart
That scarce can play the ardent lover's part:
When it on you fond praises would bestow,
Words fail to paint so close a friendship's glow;
I turn myself to nature, and the praise
That I should give to you, my fond heart pays
To nature's beauties;—but that heart is true;
If it loves nature, then it must love you.
Smile sweet approval, and 'twill well repay
The feeble efforts of my varied lay.

II. PARABLES FROM NATURE.

I.—*ASPIRATION.*

"Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth."

THE higher clouds are bright with light,
And melt away in ether blue ;
Below the earth-drawn mists are dark,
Tinged with this world's soil-tainted hue.

Mount up, my soul, to where the sun
Shall charge thee with his lustrous fire ;
And leave behind the atmosphere
Of thought impure and low desire.

Bathed in the beams from heaven's throne,
That shoot athwart this shadowed sphere,
Like Him thou shalt become, in whom
Light uncreated doth appear.

He is the source from whence alone
Can fall on thee the sheen divine,
That robe of glory, clasped in which
The God-illumined ever shine.

II.—*PROVIDENCE.*

"We know that to them that love God all things work together for good."

THE dull grey sky
Nor hope nor happiness brings to my heart;
I brooding sit
Oppressed with woe, in shadowed vale, apart:
When suddenly
Upsprings the tempest from the frowning main;
With giant arms,
The whirlwind rends the curtain-cloud in twain;
And shafts of light
Shoot down to earth, and, like Ithuriel's spear,
Touch and dispel
The fiend's dark shadow, cause of all my fear;
Care flies away,
And, as I look abroad upon the scene,
Nature responds,
With throbbing gladness, to the sun's bright sheen.

What means it all?
Why, evil rises to contend with ill:
The storm lays hands
Upon the pall outspread o'er plain and hill,
And tears away
The veil of sorrow from fair nature's face,
So that again
Her bright eyes sparkle with their native grace:
And so in life—
Weighed down and crushed beneath the load of grief,
Some strong, stern power,
Uprising in experience, gives relief:
Ill fights with ill,
And each the other weakens and destroys;
The brooding heart
Is freed from thraldom, and endowed with joys.
And thus all things,
By hand that is Divine, shaped and subdued,
Together work
To bring to life and soul the highest good.

III.—*LIFE THROUGH DEATH.*

"Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone: but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

1. THE SEED.

SWEPT from the sower's hand, cast to the ground,
And, under foot of man and hoof of beast,
Down-trodden to the earth; the fœtid soil
Its sepulchre ignoble, where the coil,
In which the hidden soul of life was bound,
All crushed and torn, all loosened and unwound,
Drops off and dies;
The seed low lies.
Now seems the hope for ever to have ceased
That linked its future with the joyous feast;
To bread transformed, beheld it crown the board,
And strength to hand and heart of man afford.

The spring has come, the winds are soft,
And through the woodland gently breathe;
The fleecy cloudlets, borne aloft,
The sunny brow of heaven enwreath;
The dewdrops greet the morning light—
Tear-stains of troubled dreams of night
Kissed by the ruby lips of dawn,
And kissed, and kissed away;
For winter's frown is past and gone,
And come the smile of May.

The mellow sunshine silent falls
Athwart the lea-land and the plain,
And from the death-sleep whispering calls
To life again the buried grain;
And shyly, timid shoots appear,
Fair promise of the golden ear;
Rippling across the fields they run
In rills of tender green,
Sweet springs from nature's bosom won
To gladden all the scene.

Through the quiet air of evening comes the joyous chorus swelling,
Like the wind-hymn in the forest or the wave-song on the shore;

Its cadence, rising, falling, to the heart rejoicing telling
Of the sheaves, in safety gathered, and the treasured golden store:
Harvest praises are ascending,
Hearts in adoration bending
To the Father-God, all bountiful, who gives the household bread;
Who, even through its dying,
The seed-corn multiplying,
Exacts from death its tribute, that His children may be fed.
And, teeming now with blessing,
To souls its worth confessing,
The grain of wheat yields precious spoil, and sweet content imparts;
No more "alone abiding,"
But lavishingly providing
Its "hundred-fold" to crown the feast and gladden thankful hearts.

2. THE SAVIOUR.

REJECTED and despised, a Man of grief,
For whom the earth no place has save a grave,
The thorn-crowned King of sorrow, lifted up,
And on the throne-cross drinking deep the cup
Of sin and shame; in suffering the chief,
And from His pangs nor respite nor relief.
Now shout aloud
The ribald crowd,
"Is this the Man who others came to save?
Himself He cannot rescue from the grave!"
The darkness closes in. The weary heart,
Sigh-laden, breaks: in death the pale lips part.
And to the silence of the rock-cut tomb
A faithful few, amid the twilight gloom,
The bruised and broken body gently bear,
And whisper, weeping, as they lay it there,
"Alas, we thought He Israel would redeem:
Crushed all our hope, and shattered all our dream."

So fair and sweet the morn awakes,
And o'er the purple eastern hills
A golden stream of lustre breaks,
Its shining tide the valley fills.

Two nights of weary grief are gone;
On sorrow, this the third day's dawn;
Ah! why is all so calm and bright,
When life and hope are fled?
More fitly were an endless night
Enwrapped around our dead.

But still the murmur of the heart,
For tidings strange this morn has brought;
Love came to play her loving part,
But Him she found not whom she sought.
"Why seek the Living 'midst the dead?
He is not here," the angels said.'
The tomb was void, and fold on fold,
The cerebands broken lay;
The grave the Victor could not hold,
Nor death His freedom stay.

Fair form that breaks upon the sight!
And fairer far for all its scars;
Transfigured in the morning light
No shade of pain or sorrow mars.
And, softly falling on the ear
The well-known voice, so sweet and clear,

In tones of love, to Love reveals
The treasure of her heart;
Her sad and lonely spirit heals
Of all its woeful smart.

In the boundless heaven of heavens mighty trumpet-tones are pealing,
Wave on wave, the sounds tumultuous assail the ravished ear;
Through the rifts of clouds fire-lustred, hidden glory part revealing,
Scenes of majesty and splendour to the wond'ring eyes appear;
And, enthroned 'midst praises sounding,
And angelic guards surrounding,
Lo! the Son of man the sceptre wields of undisputed sway;
Bright seraphim adore Him,
And cherubim before Him,
Enrobed in light, bend at His feet, and willing homage pay;
And ransomed saints extolling,
Like voice of thunders rolling,

Or floods of waters, swelling loud, His might and love proclaim;
Name every name transcending,
Felicity unending
Reward His victory achieved, through suffering and shame.

3. THE SINNER.

"No sorrow is like mine," the sinner cries,
"No deeper shadow can enshroud the heart.
By God and hope abandoned, self-abhorred,
For why? These hands have crucified my Lord!
Ah me! how heavy on my soul now lies
The load of sin! No ease can I devise:
Nor can I find
Peace to my mind
In scenes where once I bore a joyous part,
Their pleasures powerless all to heal my smart:
No prospect save to fall beneath the rod—
The just displeasure of an angry God."

What voice is this that speaks of peace,
And bids the mourning soul be still,

Whose soothing tones make sorrow cease,
And banish all the fears of ill;
That breathes, in words strong-winged with love,
Promise of pardon from above?
'Tis His who suffered, bled, and died,
Pierced by the hand of sin;
Whose latest breath to heaven cried
God's grace for man to win.

And now the hand of Love Divine
Has bound the bruised and broken heart,
And, pouring forth the balm benign,
Has triumphed in the healing art;
Has made the wounded spirit whole,
New life has quickened in the soul.
And with the throbbing of the life
Come peace, come joy, and rest;
For ever stilled the wasting strife,
The heart for ever blest.

Sacred feast of Love's providing, every earthly feast excelling,
Scene of blissfulness, transcending all that tongue or pen can tell,

Kingly welcome of the children to their heavenly
Father's dwelling,
Sweet home-coming of the Bride, within the Bride-
groom's house to dwell.
Weeping for a night enduring,
But the morning, joy ensuring—
Blessed law that never faileth in the kingdom of God's
grace—
Now past and gone for ever
The shadows all that sever
The yearning heart from rapture, in the heaven of
Christ's face;
For He who, once forth-going,
With tears, the seed-corn sowing,
His sheaves all gathered in with joy, now at the feast
presides;
And every soul entrancing,
And all their joys enhancing,
Amidst His blessed ransomed ones, He evermore
abides.

III. ODDS AND ENDS.

REDBREAST.

A LITTLE redbreast on the gravel,
A tiny pulse of life :
It has home and mate in its little estate,
And is subject to fortune, or else to fate,
As well as you or I.

A little redbreast on the gravel,
A tiny pulse of life :
It has grief and joy, in a wondrous alloy,
And has duties its daily life to employ,
As well as you or I.

A little redbreast on the gravel,
A tiny pulse of life :
It has place and pale in the universe' scale,
And has rights of its own over hill and dale,
As well as you or I.

A little redbreast on the gravel,
A tiny pulse of life:
Woe unto the hand that would loosen the band
Of its hold on life; it might vengeance demand,
As well as you or I.

DIRGE.

WILT thou never be still, O sea?
I am weary of thy complaining;
On the rocky ribbed shore for evermore
Must the spray of thy surf be raining?

Oh, fain would my heart be at rest,
But the ceaseless sound of thy beating,
By day and by night, in darkness and light,
Keeps the old sad story repeating.

Ah! 'tis many a year ago,
Since the tone of thy music changing,
Turned thy joyous swell to a sullen knell,
All its peace from my heart estranging.

In the gladsome days that are gone,
Thy voice, to my rapture replying,
Loud echoing, thrilled the soul-chords, and filled
With delight that appeared undying.

But a night of horror came down,
O'erwhelming the day of my gladness;
Thy waves to my ear brought tidings of fear,
Ringing dirges in notes of sadness.

Far away on the foamy deep,
Thy billows roll over my treasure;
When the winds were loud, thy waters a shroud
Enswathed round the soul of my pleasure.

Wilt thou never be still, O sea?
I am weary of thy complaining;
Must I ever weep, and vain vigils keep,
Whilst thy surf on the shore is raining?

THE ILLUSIONS OF LIFE.

LITTLE philosopher, five years old,
Watching the sun set in purple and gold,
Cried, "Why, the clouds away over there
Seem touching the ground; up into the air
I could surely climb, and reach the sun;
But they higher get as I to them run."

Little philosopher, wider truth
Your wise little saying teaches forsooth.
Just on the horizon, over there,
At the end of some prospect bright and fair,
The way to surpassing bliss appears;
But when we have passed through the toiling years,
And reached the purpose before us set,
The pathway to bliss is above us yet.

HOPE.

THE wintry wind is driving past,
And whistling through the dismal wood,
And tossing in its passion rude
The leafless branches, outward cast.

The moon is shrouded from my sight,
No light shines forth to guide my path;
The tempest in its dreadful wrath
Has snatched away the gems of night.

The sable curtains hang above;
But sometimes, by a hand unseen,
The folds are parted, and between
Shines forth a single star of love—

A single star, whose silver ray
Breaks through and through my saddened heart,
And bids the sombre gloom depart,
Nor longer hold its baneful sway.

SIMILE.

THE sun's refulgent rays shine back
With greater brightness on the scene,
When mirrored from the frowning sky
By some dark cloud that hangs between.
So have I heard the merry laugh
With greater glee the pale lips part,
When some dark cloud of sorrow past
Still hovered o'er the saddened heart.

FRAGMENT.

THE very breeze that carries joy,
And closer wafts two loving hearts,
Bears on its wings the breath of sighs
And from the lover, lover parts.

ON A LIKENESS.

THIS morning's post a carte-de-visite brought,
The post-mark said from York. I looked within
The envelope, for certainly, I thought,
The sender must have placed a note therein.
But no! two little sheets of paper white,
And on them not the shadow of a stroke
Of pen or quill; but, looking fresh and bright,
The picture's self my sole regard bespoke.
The dainty head poised on the dainty neck,
The hair in sweet entanglement above;
The brow, like Parian marble, void of speck;
The calm, clear eyes, twin quivers full of love;
The ear, as delicate as pearly shell;
The cheeks, soft rounded as a dove's warm breast;
The nostrils, moulded as by sculptor's spell;
The lips, just such as make a lover blest;
The shapely arm, gloved all its snowy length,
And upward bent, with polished elbow pressed

On relic of some tawny creature's strength,
Forms for the chin a pedestal of rest;
And, coyly stooping forward—shall we say,
The figure bends, just waiting to be kissed?
The rest, a fleecy cloud that fades away,
'Midst leaves and flowers, into ethereal mist.

. . . . .

"But why came there no letter with the card?"
I asked again; when lo! a voice I heard
Behind me answer, "Why, what are you seeking?
What would you more? Is not the likeness
speaking?"

IN MEMORY OF A CHILD.

WE creatures are of time, and on the dial
The shadows of our sorrows tell the hours;
And as they pass, amidst this scene of trial
We stand, and in our hands are fading flowers.
But every shadow, as it comes and goes,
Records the nearing hour of timeless dawn;
Forecasts the sphere which never sorrow knows,
Where all our tears and sighs are past and gone.
And though thy bud has withered ere it bloomed,
One breath of Heaven shall its life restore,
And there, with fragrance passing sweet perfumed,
'Twill blossom in rare beauty evermore.

IN MEMORY OF J—— B——, M. A.

(Early in his illness he made the remark, "I wonder if we shall ever all sit round the same table again?")

"When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place; that when he that hath bidden thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher."

HE sits not by us at the board,
We only see his vacant chair;
We miss his happy converse there—
His speech with wit and wisdom stored.

Rare gifts had he in speech and thought,
Rare graces, bursting into flower;
And learning too, and reas'ning power—
Fair fruit by patient study brought.

Yet over all he meekly wore
The garment of humility;
And in his Father's house each day
He sat him down beside the door.

The King came in to see His guests;
"Son, come up higher," then He said;
And to the upper table led.
Who question shall the King's behests?

Oh, soon the King may come again!
To us the invitation give,
That nearer to Him we may live:
And sweet shall be the meeting then.

Till then, we wait, and watch, and pray;
For though our eyes are dim with tears,
And cheerless seem the coming years,
Yet comes at last the festal day.

REALITY.

I LOOKED through the vista of former years,
And the shadows of the past
Came trooping before my straining eyes,
As mists from the sleeping valleys rise,
Where the sun's warm rays are cast.

And I asked myself, "Is there anything real
In all that has passed away?
Is life but a vain delusive dream,
And the things of earth not what they seem,
But only a false display?"

"Look not on the past," cried a warning voice,
"But turn to the time untold;
For there you may read in letters clear
A truth that shall bid away your fear,
And your riddle dark unfold."

I turned, and the light of the Morning Star
Shone full on the opened scroll;
And thus the words of the answer ran:
"The things of the earth shall fade, but *man*
Has a never-dying soul."

PRAYER.

GOD of my hope, my Father dear,
A child of Thine, cold, erring, weak,
Yet I Thy gracious face would seek,
And to Thy lofty throne draw near.

O Lord, since Thou hast linked my heart
To one whose life is half of mine,
Grant that she may be wholly Thine,
Possessor of the "better part."

As rose-bud fast by petals bound,
So guard Thou her from every dread;
The shadow of Thy wings o'erspread,
Thy everlasting arms around.

As shines the sun from azure bright,
So shine Thy face upon her way;
And be to her a ceaseless day,
Succeeded by no darksome night.

Hers may each hallowed blessing be,
May perfect peace possess her soul;
And as a racer to the goal,
So be her heart's desire to Thee.

And grant, as years roll on in love,
Each year a pearl in her crown
May be, from Heaven's gate dropped down;
Her crown, a crown in realms above.

THE MYSTERY OF EVIL.

THE universe is God's own harp; His fingers strike the chords:
The swelling music spreads afar, and heavenly joy affords.
We in this sinful world can hear but one strange jarring part:
The sound at times perplexes us, and sadly moves the heart.
But faith may look with certain hope toward the Christian's goal;
Where, joy of joys! the soul will hear the grand harmonic whole.

FADING AWAY.

FADING away, fading away!
Like the last faint streaks of the waning day,
Robbing my heart of its gladd'ning light,
And chilling my soul with the damp of night.

Fading away, fading away!
The glad and the sad, the grave and the gay,
The friends of my youth for ever gone,
And the love-light quenched, that so brightly shone.

Fading away, fading away!
Must friendship for ever like this decay?
Must the hands we clasp and the lips we kiss
For ever be snatched from our love like this?

Fading away, fading away!
Oh, when will the light of the endless day
Break on the gloom of my mourning heart,
And join me in friendship which ne'er shall part?

MADNESS.

LET me laugh with joy, for the storm-god sings,
And my spirit is wild and free;
Could I soar aloft on the tempest's wings,
I would shout with a careless glee:
For the storm-god has ravished the world wide
Of its beauteous fragile forms;
They were borne away on the surging tide,
By the grasp of the howling storms.
And I have lost one of the fairest flowers
That e'er bent 'neath the zephyr's breath;
Ere autumn ceased, it was torn from my bowers
By the skeleton hand of death.
I could wish that now when the winter's blast
Swims along with its fearful sway,
That the might of the winds would seize me fast
And whirl me madly away:

Whirl me far from this burden of grief
To—where? I care not where;
If 'twould only free me, and give relief
From this cankerous, weary care.
So I laugh with joy, and exult in gloom,
'Midst the winter, so bleak and bare;
For the winter of death has shed the bloom
I cherished with loving care.
And I would that the ghastly king of death
Would come to my bowers again,
And bear me away on his icy breath,
While the storms of the winter reign.

BALLAD.

(AN IMITATION.)

DAUGHTER.

"COME, mother, braid my flowing hair,
And bring my silken gown;
For I must meet Lord Evelyn
Before the sun goes down.

Already from the western hills
Its melting rays are spread,
And soon its glory will be hid
Behind Ben Lomond's head."

MOTHER.

"I cannot braid your flowing hair,
Nor bring your silken gown;
Nor will you meet Lord Evelyn,
Before the sun goes down;

For yesternight I dreamt a dream,
I saw a mournful sight;
Lord Evelyn lay cold and dead
Beneath the red torch light."

DAUGHTER.

"Now, by the Virgin, tell me where
You dreamt my lover lay;
Was't in the glen, or in the carse,
Or on the broad highway?"

MOTHER.

"'Twas neither in the glen nor carse,
Nor on the broad highway;
But in a dungeon, dark and deep,
Far from the breath of day.

He lay upon the dismal floor,
The cold sweat on his face;
And there they digged a grave for him—
His lonely resting-place."

DAUGHTER.

"Now, who were they that digged his grave,
And who had slain my love?
Your riddle dark I charge you tell
By all the powers above."

MOTHER.

"Your father digged the dungeon grave,
Your father slew the knight;
And I stood by to hold the torch,
And give your father light."

DAUGHTER.

"Now, mother, why are you so pale?
And what is this I see?
There's blood upon your silken gown,
And glamour in your e'e.

Now answer, by the queen of heaven:
Is't but a dream you show?
Or say if by my father's hand
Lord Evelyn lies low?"

MOTHER.

"What matter if it were no dream?
He was your father's foe;
What matter if your father's hand
Dealt him the deadly blow?

But I will braid your flowing hair,
And bring your gown beside;
For yonder comes the Earl Mar,
And you shall be his bride."

DAUGHTER.

"Come, mother, bind my flowing hair,
And make my linen shroud,
For I must meet Lord Evelyn,
And not this earl proud.

Then, bear me to Lord Evelyn,
And lay me by his side;
For I will never leave my love
To be this earl's bride."

LOVE SONG.

FROM THE GERMAN OF COUNT VON STOLBERG.

AH me! so heavy is my heart,
I sadly wander to and fro,
I seek for rest, and find it not,
But weeping to the lattice go.

Had I but thee upon my breast,
Of all my cares I would be free;
And into those blue eyes of thine
Would gaze with constant ecstasy.

Would I were able, thou sweet child,
To fly to thee with rapid flight,
To clasp thee ever in my arms,
And on thy sweet lips sip delight.

THE END.

PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

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